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SERMONS,

ON

VARIOUS IMPORTANT SUBJECTS

OF

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE.

BY NATHANAEL EMMONS, D.D.

Vol. II.

BOSTON:

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WILLIAM S. SHAW,
Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.

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SERMON I.

THE TRUE GOD IS TO BE WORSHIPPED, AS EXISTING IN THREE PERSONS.

EPHESIANS ii, 18.

For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

GOD has revealed his will to mankind gradually, by one inspired teacher after another. And these teachers never represent any thing as new, which had been revealed before. Thus Moses takes it for a revealed and well known-truth, that the sabbath is to be sanctified, the first time he mentions that day. All the prophets after him speak of temporal death, human depravity, and a future state of happiness and misery, as things already revealed and universally believed. Our Saviour never pretends to teach any thing as new, which had been taught before, by any of the teachers sent from God. And it is very remarkable, that neither Christ nor the Apostles ever speak of the sacred Trinity as a new, but only as an old doctrine, which had been taught and believed, under all the previous dispensations of the gospel. When Christ instituted the ordinance of Baptism, to be administered in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, he gives no intimation, that he meant to reveal any thing new, respecting these adorable persons in the Godhead. So the Apostles, in their familiar letters to the churches, occasionally speak of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as though it were a doctrine well known and universally believed, by common christians, that the one true God exists in

three equally divine Persons. This remark is supported by the phraseology in the text. Speaking of the partition wall between Jews and Gentiles as being taken away by the gospel, the Apostle says in the most familiar manner, "Through him (Christ) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Here the Apostle plainly supposes, that the christians to whom he wrote, were well acquainted with the great and practical doctrine of the Trinity, and in their most solemn devotions, exercised distinct and peculiar affections towards each distinct person in the Godhead. Now this familiar manner, in which Christ and the Apostles speak of the doctrine of the Trinity, is a strong presumptive evidence, that it was not a new doctrine in their day; but a doctrine, which had been revealed and believed ever since the first promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. If it were ever proper for guilty creatures in this world, to present their prayers and praises to the Father, through the Son, and by the Spirit, it was proper before the law, under the law, and under the gospel. Hence we may justly conclude,

That we ought to address and worship the one true God, as existing in three Persons.

As it is the only design of the present discouse, to set this subject in a plain, and practical light, I shall proceed to illustrate it, in the following method:

I. Show that there is but one true God.

II. Show that the one true God exists in three Persons.

III. Show why we ought to address and worship the one true God, according to this personal distinction in the divine nature.

I. We are to consider the unity of the Deity.

It is much easier to prove from the light of nature, that there is *one* God, than to prove the impossibility of there being any more than one. Though some plausible arguments in favour of the unity of the Deity, may be drawn from the beauty, order, and harmony apparent in the creatures and objects around us, and from the Nature of a self-existent, independent, and perfect Being; yet these arguments fall far short of full proof or strict demonstration. To obtain complete and satisfactory evidence, that there is but one living and true God, we must have resort to the Scriptures of truth, in which the divine Unity is cleary and fully revealed. God has always been extremely jealous of his unity, which has been so often disbelieved and denied in this rebellious and idolatrous world. He has never condescended to give his glory to another, nor his praise to false and inferior deities. He said, in the first of his commands to his own people, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." After this, he directed Moses to go and say, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." These precepts and prohibitions soon lost their restraining influence upon a people bent to backsliding; which gave occasion for more frequent and solemn declarations of the divine unity and supremacy, by succeeding prophets. Isaiah is directed to say, "Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of Hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no god. Is there any god beside me? yea, there is no god: I know not any. I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me: Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create

darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." In these passages, the God of Israel asserts his unity, not only in opposition to the heathens in general, who supposed there were many gods, but more especially against the Manicheans, who supposed there were two eternal, self-existent beings, the one the author of all good, and the other the author of all evil. And taking these texts in this sense, they prove not only, that the God of Israel is the greatest of all that have been supposed to be gods; but that he is the only true God, exclusively of all other beings in the universe. Our Saviour taught the unity of God, as plainly and expressly as the prophets. When a certain man came and said unto him, Good master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? he demanded, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God." At another time he said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent." And when the unity of the Deity was implicitly called in question by Satan, who tempted him to worship him, he repelled and silenced him by saying, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him *only* shalt thou serve." The Apostle Paul also asserts the unity of God in the most plain and unequivocal terms. "We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one. There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen." Thus the inspired writers unitedly and expressly assert, that there is but one living and true God, who possesses self-existence, independence, and every other divine perfection. But yet,

II. The one living and true God exists in three distinct Persons.

It is generally supposed, that the inspired writers of the Old Testament, give some plain intimations of a plurality of persons in the Godhead. Moses, in speaking of God, very often used the plural number, when the idiom of the language allowed him to use the same word, or some other, in the singular number; which is a presumptive evidence, that he meant to intimate a personal distinction in the divine nature. And this supposition is strengthened, by his representing God himself as speaking in the same manner, on different occasions. He tells us, that when God was about to create man, he said, "Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness." And again, that when he was about to confound the language of the builders of Babel, he said, "Go to, let *us* go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." Moses often mentions "the Angel of the Lord," who appeared to the ancient patriarchs in the figure of a man, but spake the language of God. This was undoubtedly Christ, the second person in the Trinity, whom the Apostle says "had been in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Job seems to have been acquainted with the plurality of persons in the Deity, and to have built his hopes of salvation upon the atonement of the second. "I know that my Redeemer liveth; and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." David, clearly understood the doctrine of the Trinity, and frequently refers to each Person, in the book of Psalms. He says to God, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." And again he says, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit; or whither shall

I flee from thy presence?" He once and again mentions both the Father and Son together. "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." This refers to the promise of the Father to the Son, in the second Psalm. "The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." These predictions respected each person in the Trinity, as the Apostle Peter tells us in the second chapter of Acts. "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, set thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool." After this, Peter further says, "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold these days." It plainly appears from this passage, that all the prophets, who foretold the coming of Christ, understood the doctrine of the Trinity, and the different parts, which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, were to act in carrying into execution

the gracious scheme of redemption. And just so far as the people of God understood the predictions of their prophets, respecting the Messiah, they too must have known and believed the plurality of Persons in the Deity.

But we find this, like many other great and important doctrines, more clearly revealed, by Christ and the Apostles, than it had been before, by the Prophets. Christ said a great deal about the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He commended his apostles and their successors in the ministry, to baptize visible believers, in the name of this sacred Trinity. He promised to send the Holy Ghost, to comfort his disciples, and to convince and convert sinners. And he neglected no proper opportunity of teaching his hearers, that He, his Father, and the Holy Spirit, were three equally divine Persons, united in one God. After his death, his apostles strenuously maintained and propagated the same doctrine. The apostle John wrote his gospel with a principal view, to maintain the divinity and equality of each person in the Trinity. And in his second Epistle he expressly says, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." The apostle Paul begins and ends all his Epistles, in the very spirit and language of the Trinity. It may suffice to mention one instance, in the close of his second epistle to the Corinthians. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen." These few passages of Scripture plainly show, that God has revealed himself to his people, in every age of the church, as existing in three Persons.

III. This leads us to inquire why we ought to address and worship the one true God, according to this personal distinction in the divine nature.

1. Here the first reason which occurs is, because we ought, in our religious devotions, to acknowledge every thing in God, which belongs to his essential glory. Much of his essential glory consists in his existing a Trinity in Unity; which is a mode of existence infinitely superior to that of any other beings in the universe. Though there is a wide difference in the powers and capacities; as well as moral characters, of intelligent creatures, yet we know of no difference in their mode of existence. Among the vast variety of created natures, no individual has ever been known, who existed in a plurality of persons. This mode of existence is peculiar to the one only living and true God, and constitutes one of the essential perfections of his nature. We ought, therefore, to acknowledge this as well as any other divine attribute, in our addresses to the Deity. It is the great design of religious worship, to give unto God all the honour and glory, which are due unto his name. There is precisely the same reason why we should address our Maker, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God in three Persons; as why we should address him, as the first, the greatest, the wisest, and the best of Beings.

2. We ought to address and worship God, according to the personal distinction in the divine nature, because we are deeply indebted to each person in the Godhead, for the office he sustains and the part he performs, in the great work of redemption.

The Father is by nature God, and by office, the Creator, Lawgiver, Governor, and Judge of the world. It is the Father in his official character, who formed the gospel scheme of salvation; who appointed Christ to be the Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost the sanctifier, of mankind; who created all things according to his eternal purpose in Christ Jesus; who gave the pro-

hibition to Adam, and the law to Israel, who governed the world from Adam to Christ; and who will judge the world at the last day. Though any or all these works, may be ascribed to the Son and Spirit; yet they cannot be properly ascribed to either, in the same sense in which they are to be ascribed to the Father. Neither the Son, nor the Spirit, ever work *officially* with the Father; nor the Father *officially* with the Son, or Spirit. It is the peculiar and exclusive office of the Father, to foreordain all things, to create all things, to govern all things, and to give law and judgment to the whole intelligent creation.

The Son is by nature God, and by office, the Redeemer, Mediator, or Savior of the world. In this office, he has acted, and still acts, in subordination to the Father. According to his eternal appointment, he became personally united with human nature, took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, to make complete atonement for all mankind: and he now lives to intercede for the elect, and to overrule all things for their benefit.

The Holy Ghost is by nature God, and by office, the Sanctifier and Comforter of the heirs of salvation. In this office, he acts in subordination to the Son, as well as to the Father, and applies the atonement of Christ to those who were ordained to eternal life. He awakens their consciences, renews their hearts, and carries on a work of grace within them until he has made them meet for the kingdom of glory.

Thus each Person in the Godhead has laid us under distinct and peculiar obligations to himself, for what he has done to promote our salvation. We are indebted to the Father for bringing us into existence, and sending his Son to die for us. We are indebted to

the Son for his condescension and grace, in redeeming us to God by his blood. And we are indebted to the Holy Ghost for all he has done to form us vessels of mercy. This is a good reason why we should acknowledge and worship God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and exercise those affections, which are correspondent to the obligations we are under to each of these divine Persons. Though we cannot form a clear and comprehensive idea of their Unity; yet we can form a clear and destinct idea of their Personality and Agency, which is all we need to know, in order to give each the glory which is due to his name.

3. We ought to address and worship the true God, according to the personal distinction in the divine nature, because this is necessarily implied in holding communion with him. It is owing to God's existing a Trinity in Unity, that he can hold the most perfect and blessed communion with himself. And it is owing to the same personal distinction, in the divine nature, that christians can hold communion with each and all the Persons in the Godhead. The inspired writers represent true believers as holding communion sometimes with the Father, sometimes with the Son, and sometimes with the Holy Ghost. Christ prayed, that all his followers might enjoy the same union and communion with him, which he enjoyed with the Father. The apostle John says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." The apostle Paul tells christians, that "God is faithful, by whom they were called unto the *fellowship* of his Son Jesus Christ." And again he says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." Christians may hold communion with the love of the Father in sending his Son; with the love of the Son in

suffering on the cross; and with the love of the Holy Ghost, in sanctifying their hearts. But they cannot hold communion with the Holy Ghost in sending the Son, for he did not send him; nor with the Father in suffering on the cross, for he never did suffer on the cross. This shows, that when Christians hold communion with God, they hold communion with each person in the Godhead distinctly. Their communion with the Father is not their communion with the Son, and their communion with the Son is not their communion with the Father, and their communion with the Spirit is not their communion with either Father or Son. They hold distinct communion with each Person in the sacred Trinity. It is, therefore, the belief and love of this doctrine, which lays the foundation for that holy and intimate communion with God, which will be the source of their highest enjoyment, both in time and eternity.

4. We are not only allowed, but constrained, to address and worship the true God, according to the personal distinction in the divine nature, because there is no other way, in which we can find access to the throne of divine grace. This important idea is plainly contained in the text. "For *through him*, that is, Christ, we both have *access* by one Spirit unto the Father." Our Savior expresses the same sentiment in stronger terms. "Jesus saith, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: *no man cometh unto the Father but by me.*" The Apostle represents believers as enjoying pardon, peace, and access to God, through Christ alone. "Therefore, being justified by faith we have *peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. *By whom* we have *access* by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and *rejoice* in the hope of the glory of God." As it was Christ who made atonement for sin, so it is only

"through him that we can have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Sinful creatures cannot approach to the Father in the same way that innocent creatures can. The holy angels can approach to the Father directly without the mediation or intercession of Christ. But we must approach to the Father, in that new and living way which Christ has consecrated for us, through his atoning blood. Indeed, according to the economy of redemption, we can have nothing to do with God, our offended Sovereign, only as existing in three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is only through Christ, that we have liberty of access unto the Father, and may come boldly unto the throne of grace for pardoning mercy. This renders it not only proper, but indispensable, that we should address and worship God, according to the personal distinction in the divine nature. For, it is only in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, our mediator and intercessor, that the Father can consistently hear our prayers, accept our persons, and make us forever happy in the enjoyment of heaven.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. This discourse teaches us, that the doctrine of the Trinity is one of the essential and most important articles of Christianity.

It is universally allowed, that some doctrines of the gospel are more important, than others; but it is not so universally allowed, that the doctrine of the Trinity is a primary article of faith. Some deny the importance of this doctrine from one motive, and some from another. Some who really disbelieve the doctrine, choose to conceal their disbelief, by only calling its importance in question. Some who doubt whether the doctrine be true are very willing to speak of it as

a dark and unimportant point. And among those who profess to believe the truth of the doctrine, there are some who, for the sake of holding communion with the doubting and disbelieving, are disposed to discard it from the catalogue of the essentials and fundamentals of Christianity. But it is extremely absurd for any who admit the truth, to deny the importance, of the doctrine of the sacred Trinity. A more plain, or a more important, or a more practical doctrine, cannot be found in the whole volume of inspiration. It is as easy to conceive of three divine Persons, as to conceive of one divine Person, the only difficulty is to conceive how three divine Persons, should be but one divine Being. But this is the mystery of the doctrine, which it is neither possible nor necessary for us to understand. It is enough for us to believe, that there are three equally divine persons in the Godhead, and to feel and conduct towards each person according to his divine nature and peculiar office. This the man of the meanest capacity, as well as the most learned and acute divine, may and ought to do, because the doctrine of the Trinity is as plainly revealed in Scripture, as any other divine mystery. No man can seriously and impartially read the Bible, whether he believes it to be of divine inspiration or not, without finding the doctrine of the Trinity there. It is true, this, like several other important doctrines, is more clearly revealed in the New Testament, than in the Old; but it is so clearly revealed in both, that it cannot be denied, or explained away, without shaking the foundation of the gospel. For the whole scheme of redemption was not only devised and adopted by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; but each person engaged to bear a distinct part, in carrying it into execution. If there be, therefore, any one doctrine of the gospel,

which may be properly called *fundamental*, the doctrine of the Trinity may be properly called so, because the whole gospel is built upon it. Accordingly we find that those who deny the doctrine of the Trinity, do equally deny the doctrine of the atonement, and every other peculiar and important doctrine of Christianity, and bring it down to a level with mere natural religion. The doctrine of the Trinity is so fundamental to the gospel, that it cannot be denied or subverted, without denying or subverting the whole gospel. Nor is it less necessary and important in a *practical*, than in a *speculative* view. All religious worship, true devotion, or vital piety depends upon it. No prayers, nor praises of ours can find acceptance with the Father unless they flow from the influence of the Spirit, and are offered in the name of the Son. We may as well hope to worship God in a right and acceptable manner, without believing and loving the the gospel; as without believing and loving the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity. It is only in the belief and love of this great and fundamental truth, that we can so worship and glorify God, as to enjoy him forever. We ought, therefore, to hold the doctrine of the adorable Trinity, in high estimation, and endeavor to transmit it pure and uncorrupt to the latest generations. In this light, orthodox christians in every age of the church have considered it, and never failed to give it a place in all their public Creeds or Confessions of faith. And though there have been divers Sects, who have partially or totally denied the doctrine; yet the great body of the most pure and pious christians have from the Apostles' days to the present time, treated and defended it, as one of the first principles of the Oracles of God; and generally denied christian communion and fellowship to those, who have openly embraced either the Arian, Socinian, Sabellian, or Unitarian error.

2. It appears from what has been said, that we ought to regard and acknowledge the FATHER, as the head of the sacred Trinity, and the primary object of religious homage. Though all the three Persons in the Godhead are equal in every divine perfection, yet they are not equal in respect to the order and the office, which they severally sustain, in the work of redemption. The Father is the first in order, and the supreme in office; and for this cause, we ought to present our prayers and praises more immediately and directly to him, than to either of the other persons in the Godhead. This is plainly intimated in the text. "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the FATHER." We often read of Christ's praying unto the Father, but never read of the Father's praying unto Christ. He taught his disciples to pray in the same form in which he prayed, and to say, "Our *Father* which art in heaven;" and to "ask the *Father* in his name," for every thing they wanted. And how often did the Apostles offer up their devout and fervent prayers for others, to "the God and *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ?" This common mode of expression, in their addresses to the throne of grace, plainly implies, that they meant to acknowledge the Father, as the primary or supreme object of adoration. Though the heavenly hosts pay divine homage to the Son of God, yet they more immediately and directly address the Father in their most solemn and grateful devotions. "They say, blessing and honor and glory and power be unto *Him* that sitteth on the *throne*, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." These examples of Christ, of the Apostles, and of the heavenly Hosts, not only warrant, but require christians to address their prayers and praises to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the primary object of divine homage and adoration. But,

3. Since God exists in three equally divine persons, there appears to be good ground to pay divine homage to each person distinctly. Though the Father is most generally to be distinctly and directly addressed; yet sometimes there may be a great propriety in addressing the Son and Spirit, according to their distinct ranks and offices. Christ said, "the Father would that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." Accordingly, Christ never rejected nor condemned the divine homage, which was repeatedly paid to him both before and after his resurrection. Stephen, we know, with his dying breath prayed and said, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." This, if there were no other instance of the kind recorded in scripture, would warrant us to pray distinctly and directly to Christ, as well as to the Father. It is true, we have no precept nor example for paying distinct and direct homage to the Holy Ghost; but his divine nature and office evidently render him a proper object of religious worship, and both justify and encourage us, to pray immediately and distinctly to him for his sanctifying guiding, and comforting influences. There appears to be the same reason for praying to our Sanctifier for grace, as to our Redeemer for pardon. And this has been the general opinion of orthodox christians, who have, from age to age, had their doxologies, in which they have paid distinct and equal adoration and praise to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

4. If we ought to acknowledge and worship the true God, according to the personal distinction in the divine nature; then we ought to obey him, according to the same distinction. We find some commands given by the Father, some by the Son, and some by the Holy Ghost. Though we are equally bound to obey each of these divine Persons, in point of authority, yet we ought to

obey each from distinct motives, arising from the distinct relations they bear to us, and the distinct things they have done for us. We ought to obey the Father, as our Creator; the Son as our Redeemer; and the Holy Ghost, as our Sanctifier. This distinction is as easy to be perceived and felt, as the distinction between creating goodness, redeeming mercy, and sanctifying grace. Every true believer will feel constrained from a sense of gratitude, to distinguish the commands of the Father, Son, and Spirit, and to pay a cheerful obedience to the commands of each Person, from the most endearing motives. Christ expected his friends should obey *his* commands from a sense of his kindness, as well as of his authority. "If ye love me keep my commandments. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. If a man love me, he will keep my words." The apostle and the primitive christians felt the constraining influence of gratitude, to live a life of obedience to him, who suffered and died for them. "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again." If the love of Christ be a distinct reason for obeying his commands, then the love of the Father is a distinct reason for obeying his commands; and the love of the Spirit is a distinct reason for obeying his precepts and prohibitions. Thus a cordial belief of the glorious doctrine of the Trinity, cannot fail of having a powerful and happy influence upon every branch of the christian life, as well as every act of christian piety and devotion.

It now concerns the professors of religion to inquire whether they are real, or only nominal christians. The doctrine we have been considering is a proper

criterion, to determine this serious and interesting question. If those who bear the christian name, will bring themselves to this standard, it is more than possible, that many at this day, may find that they have no good ground to hope that they are real christians. Have any a right to entertain this hope, who do not acknowledge and worship the only true God, as he has revealed himself in the gospel? Has he not there revealed himself, as the only living and true God, existing in three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? Do either the Arians, or Socinians, or Sabellians, or Unitarians, acknowledge and worship God, as existing a Trinity of Persons in a unity of essence? Do they honour the Son, or the Spirit, as they honour the Father? Is there any essential difference between their religious homage, and the religious homage of Deists or Pagans? They all perfectly agree in the sole object of their supreme worship; and may they not all be equally sincere in their religious devotions? But do any of them acknowledge and worship the only true God, according to the personal distinction in the divine nature? Do any of them approach the Father, through the Son, and by the Spirit? Is there the least trait of christianity in their religious worship? And can such infidel and pagan services meet the divine approbation? If the doctrine of the adorable Trinity be true, it must lie at the foundation of Christianity, both in theory and practice, and brand all those as *antichristian*, who refuse to worship God, in the belief and love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is hard to conceive how any man can persuade himself, that he is a real christian, who has never had any communion with the sacred Trinity, and who has always, in his religious devotions, symbolized with Pagans and Infidels.

SERMON II.

HUMAN AND DIVINE AGENCY INSEPARABLY CONNECTED.

GENESIS xlv. 5.

Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

IT is the peculiar excellence of sacred history, to display the hand and counsel of God, in the government of the moral world. The inspired writers relate not only the free and voluntary actions of men, but represent them as inseparably connected with the free and voluntary agency of the Deity. This circumstance renders sacred history much more interesting and instructive than profane, which contains little more than the bare recital of past actions and events. The agency and design of God in all the concerns of men, give them their greatest importance. Though the history of Joseph contains a great variety of singular and surprising events; yet these would appear comparatively trifling, were they not related in connexion with the ultimate design and superintendency of God, in bringing them to pass. In this view, there is something extremely interesting in the account of Joseph's making himself known to his brethren. "Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he said, Cause every man to go out from me: and there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known to his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his breth-

ren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him: for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you: and they came near: and he said I am Joseph your brother, whom *ye sold* into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that *ye sold* me hither: for *God did send* me before you to preserve life." This was as much as to say, "Though you meant to destroy a brother's life, and break a father's heart; yet I freely and heartily forgive you. And though you meant to defeat the design and control the hand of God, for which you ought to repent in dust and ashes; yet be not grieved that the event took place, for God was the supreme agent in it, and made use of you as instruments, to accomplish the wise and benevolent purpose of preserving your lives, and the lives of millions in the midst of the present extensive and destructive famine." In this address to his brethren, Joseph represents God as doing what they had done. Though they sent him into Egypt, yet he represents God as sending him thither. He more fully expresses this idea in the words immediately succeeding the text. "These two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in which there shall be neither earing or harvest. And *God sent me* before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now *it was not you* that sent me hither, *but God.*" That is, God was the primary and supreme agent, in bringing about this great and most happy event. This is the truth which now naturally falls under our consideration.

That the Scripture ascribes the actions of men both to themselves and to God.

I shall endeavour to illustrate the truth, the propriety, and the importance of this doctrine.

1. We are to consider, that the Scripture does ascribe the actions of men both to themselves and to God. It will be universally allowed, that the Scripture ascribes the actions of men to themselves. It ascribes to Abel his faith, to Cain his unbelief, to Job his patience, and to Moses his meekness. Having just premised this, I proceed to adduce instances, in which the Scripture ascribes the actions of men to God as well as to themselves. The first instance that occurs is in the history of Joseph. It is said his brethren sold him into Egypt, and at the same time God is said to send him thither. It is said God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and Pharaoh is said to harden his own heart. The same mode of expression is used in reference to the Egyptians. They hardened their own hearts, when they presumed to follow the Israelites into the midst of the sea, with a fixed design to overtake and destroy them. But God himself says he would harden their hearts on that occasion. "And I, behold I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them, and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his hosts, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen." Saul went of his own accord to Samuel, yet God says he sent him. Shimei cursed David of his own accord, yet David ascribed his conduct to the divine agency. The Sabeans and Chaldeans stripped Job of his servants and substance; yet he says, "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." God is said to do what the king of Assyria did. "O Assyria, the rod of mine anger, and the staff

in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the miré of the streets. Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off nations not a few. Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath accomplished his whole work upon Mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks." God is said to blind the minds and harden the hearts of those, who blinded their own minds and hardened their own hearts, in the days of Christ and the apostles. The prophet Isaiah speaking of the sufferings of Christ, says, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." But we know, that it was Herod, Pontius Pilate, and the Jews, who insulted, buffetted, and crucified the Lord of glory. I might mention God's *giving* love to those that love; repentance to those that repent; faith to those that believe; and purification to those who purify themselves. But enough has been said to show, that the Scripture ascribes the actions of men both to themselves and to God. I proceed to show,

II. The propriety of ascribing human actions to both human and divine agency. This, indeed, looks like a paradox, and is considered by many as a palpable absurdity, or a profound mystery. Accordingly, much ingenuity and learned labour have been employed to explain away those passages of Scripture, which ascribe the actions of men to God as well as to themselves. No pains have been spared to make it appear, that all human actions are absolutely independ-

ent of, and unconnected with any divine operation upon the human heart. And could this be established, it would be difficult to show the propriety of ascribing the actions of men both to God and themselves. But the truth is, reason and Scripture unitedly afford a solid foundation for this mode of speaking.

Mankind are creatures, and by the law of nature absolutely dependent upon God. We cannot conceive, that even Omnipotence is able to form independent agents, because this would be to endow them with divinity. And since all men are dependent agents, all their motions, exercises, or actions must originate from a divine efficiency. We can no more act, than we can exist, without the constant aid and influence of the Deity. This is the dictate of reason, which is confirmed by the declarations of Scripture. We read that "in God we live, and move, and have our being." The wise man tells us, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue are from the Lord." The apostle acknowledges, "that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." This all good men believe to be true, when they ask God to *give* them grace, and *assist* them in the performance of every duty. The apostle exhorts christians to live under an habitual sense of their dependence upon God in all their gracious exercises. He addresses them in this form: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." And he prays for believers in the same strain, in which he exhorts them to duty. "Now the God of peace,

that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, *working in you* that which is well pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ."

Now, if men always act under a divine influence, then there is a great propriety in ascribing their actions to God as well as to themselves. If they do any thing whatever, it may be truly said, it was done by the finger of God. If Joseph's brethren sold him into Egypt, God may be said to send him thither. If the Jews crucified Christ, and put him to grief, it may be said he was smitten of God and afflicted. If one nation destroys another, it may be said God destroyed that nation. If one man makes himself rich, God may be said to make him rich. If one man make himself poor, God may be said to make him poor. If one man turn from sin, God may be said to turn him. If one man follow hard after God, God may be said to draw him. If one man grow in grace, God may be said to carry on the good work he had begun in his heart. There is no occasion, therefore, of rectifying that mode of speaking on this subject, which runs through the Bible. It is strictly just and agreeable to truth. Human agency is always inseparably connected with divine agency. And though it may be proper, in some cases, to speak of man's agency alone, and of God's agency alone; yet it is always proper to ascribe the actions of men not only to themselves, but to God. The propriety of the Scripture phraseology on this subject is so plain and obvious, that it is strange so many have objected against it, and

endeavoured to explain it away. But since this is the case, it seems very necessary to show,

III. The importance of ascribing the actions of men to God as well as to themselves. We have no reason to suppose, that the sacred writers would have used such a mode of speaking, unless it were necessary and important. They wrote with a view to instruct, and not to perplex mankind. And if we properly consider the natural tendency of this mode of speaking, we shall be convinced, that it is of great importance, and answers very valuable purposes. It is the design of God in all his works, to set his own character and the character of all his reasonable and accountable creatures, in the truest and strongest light. This leads me to observe,

1. It is a matter of importance, that the actions of men should be ascribed to themselves. They are real and proper agents in all their voluntary exercises and exertions. Their actions are all their own, and as much their own as if they acted without any dependence upon God, or any other being in the universe. If a man loves God, his love is his own exercise, and a real virtue and beauty in his character. If a man hates God, his hatred is his own exercise, and a real sin and blemish in his character. All the actions of Adam, both before and after his fall, were the fruit of his own choice, and formed his character, both as a good and a bad man. And this is true of all his descendants, whether saints or sinners. Their actions are all their own, and constitute them either holy or unholy, virtuous or vicious, and worthy of praise or blame, reward or punishment. Hence it is a matter of importance, that the Scripture should ascribe the actions of men to themselves. Un-

lsss God represented men as authors of their own actions, he would not represent them in their true light. This clearly appears in the case of Joseph and his brethren. Though God foreordained and foretold their conduct, though he sent Joseph into Egypt, and made use of his brethren as means to convey him thither; yet he could not have set their amazing inhumanity, malice, and criminality in a true light, unless he had ascribed these actions to themselves, and expressly said, that *they sold* him into Egypt. This was their act and deed, which rendered them extremely criminal, not only in the sight of God and of their brother, but in the view of their own consciences. On the other side, God could not have placed the amiable character of Joseph in a true light, if he had not ascribed his virtuous, mild, and benevolent conduct to himself. It was important, that the character of Joseph should be set in contrast with the character of his brethren; and for this reason, it was no less important, that both he and they should be represented as the authors of their own actions. The same is true, in respect to all mankind. Though God is as really concerned in all their conduct, as he was in the conduct of Joseph and his brethren; yet their actions ought to be ascribed to themselves, in order, that their characters may be exhibited in a true light. This is important now, and will be still more important, at the great and last day. Accordingly, it is represented, that God will ascribe the actions of the righteous to the righteous, and the actions of the wicked to the wicked, and reward the former and punish the latter according to their own works. God's government of moral agents never will destroy their agency, and therefore he will not only ascribe their own actions to

themselves, but treat them according to their own free, voluntary conduct. It is just as important, that God should ascribe the actions of men to themselves, as that he should finally judge the world in righteousness. And now it is easy to see,

2. The importance of ascribing men's actions to God as well as to themselves. He is really concerned in all their actions, and it is as important, that his agency should be brought into view, as that theirs should. For his character can no more be known, without ascribing his agency to himself, than their characters can be known, without ascribing their agency to themselves. God was as really concerned in the whole affair of selling Joseph into Egypt, as his brethren were. And his agency was of as much importance as theirs, nay, it was of much greater importance; for he proposed the end, appointed the agents, and guided every step they took to bring it to pass. Joseph's brethren had a cruel and malignant design in their conduct; but God had a most wise and benevolent design in it. This Joseph believed and told his brethren so. "As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Had the whole story of this important event been related, without once mentioning the agency of God in it, his astonishing wisdom and goodness, in preserving Joseph, his father's family, and the whole nation of Egypt, would have been kept out of sight, and, of consequence, he would have been robbed of the glory which was due to his name. In this view, it was highly important, that the actions of Joseph's brethren should be ascribed to the agency and overruling providence of God. And it is equally important, that all the actions of

both saints and sinners should be ascribed to the divine agency. Hence we find, that the inspired writers every where represent all those graces and virtues, by which saints are formed for heaven, to the power and operation of the Deity upon their hearts. The apostle speaking of himself and other christians, who were desirous of, and prepared for heaven, says, "Now he that wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." On the other hand, we find the exercises and conduct of sinners, by which they are formed for destruction, ascribed to the operation of God upon their hearts. "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" As the glory of God could not have been displayed, in sending Joseph into Egypt to save millions from impending destruction, unless the conduct of Joseph's brethren had been ascribed to God; so the glory of God in saving the elect, and destroying the non-elect, can never be displayed, without ascribing the actions of all mankind to Him, who works in men both to will and to do of his good pleasure. In a word, it is of as much importance, that the actions of men should be ascribed both to God and to themselves, as it is that the greatest good of the universe should be promoted. For this ultimately depends upon a clear and full display of the divine as well as

human agency, in the conduct of mankind, from the beginning to the end of time.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. In the view of this subject, we learn when it is proper to ascribe the actions of men to themselves, and when it is proper to ascribe them to God. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, that the inspired writers sometimes ascribe the actions of men to themselves, without bringing the divine agency into view; and sometimes they ascribe them to God, without bringing human agency into view; and there is a perfect propriety in these two different modes of representing human actions. Whenever men are required or forbidden to act, and whenever they are approved or condemned for acting, there is a propriety in ascribing their actions to themselves, without any reference to the divine efficiency. It is their own free, voluntary agency, which alone constitutes their virtue or vice, and which renders them worthy of either praise or blame. Though they always act under a divine influence; yet that influence neither increases their virtue, nor diminishes their guilt, and of consequence ought never to be brought into view, when they are to be praised or blamed for their conduct. But when the power, wisdom, goodness, or sovereignty of God in governing their views and actions, are to be displayed, then it is proper to mention his, and only his agency in the case. Accordingly we find the sacred writers always observe strict propriety in ascribing the actions of men, either to themselves, or to the Deity. This is exemplified in the history of Joseph's brethren. When their guilt is to be brought into view and condemned *they* are said to sell Joseph into Egypt; but

when the wisdom and goodness of God are to be displayed, *he*, and not *they*, is said to send him thither. So when Pharaoh is to be blamed, *he* is said to harden his own heart; but when the divine sovereignty is to be acknowledged, *God* is said to harden his heart. And so again, when the guilt of the crucifiers of Christ is mentioned, *they* are said to perpetrate the horrid deed, with *wicked hands;* but when the benevolent design of the Deity is exhibited, the *hand*, as well as the *counsel* of God, is said to be concerned in bringing about the event. If we carry this idea in our minds, we can easily expound some passages of Scripture, which have been often misunderstood and misapplied. Among others, the following texts have given great trouble to expositors. Psalm cxix, 36, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness." Psalm cxli, 4, "Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity." Isaiah lxiii, 17, "O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways? and hardened our heart from thy fear?" Romans vi, 17, "But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin." James i, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." And chapter iii, 14, 15, 16, 17, "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory

not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." In these passages it is denied, that the *bad* actions of men may be ascribed to *God*, and equally denied on the other side, that the *good* actions of men may be ascribed to *themselves:* but yet it is asserted in these same passages, that the agency of God is concerned in disposing men both to good and evil, or in their good and bad actions. Here is no difficulty, if we only allow, that there is a propriety sometimes, in ascribing the actions of men wholly to themselves, and sometimes in ascribing their actions wholly to God. It is proper sometimes to ascribe men's good actions wholly to themselves, and sometimes equally proper to ascribe their bad actions wholly to themselves. While on the other hand, it is sometimes proper to ascribe men's good actions wholly to God, and sometimes equally proper to ascribe their bad actions wholly to him. This single idea will solve a seeming difficulty, which runs through the Bible.

2. Since the Scripture ascribes all the actions of men to God as well as to themselves, we may justly conclude, that the divine agency is as much concerned in their bad, as in their good actions. Many are disposed to make a distinction here, and to ascribe only the good actions of men to the divine agency, while they ascribe their bad ones to the divine permission. But there appears no ground for this distinction in Scripture or reason. Men are no more

capable of acting independently of God, in one instance than another. If they need any kind or degree of divine agency in doing good, they need precisely the same kind and degree of divine agency in doing evil. This is the dictate of reason, and the Scripture says the same. It is God, who worketh in men both to will and to do, in all cases without exception. He wrought equally in the minds of those, who sold, and in the minds of those, who bought Joseph. He wrought as effectually in the minds of Joseph's brethren, when they sold him, as when they repented and besought his mercy. He not only *prepared* these persons to act, but *made* them act. He not only exhibited motives of action before their minds, but *disposed* their minds to comply with the motives exhibited. But there was no possible way in which he could *dispose* them to act right or wrong, but only by producing right or wrong volitions in their hearts. And if he produced their bad as well as good volitions, then his agency was concerned, in *precisely the same manner*, in their wrong as in their right actions. It is upon this ground, and only upon this ground, that all the actions of men, whether good or evil, may properly be ascribed to God. His agency in *making* them act, necessarily connects his agency and theirs together, and lays a solid foundation to ascribe their actions either to him, or to them, or to both, as the design of the speaker or writer may require.

3. If the actions of men may be ascribed to God as well as to themselves, then it is easy to form a just and full view of divine Providence. If God is actually concerned in all human actions, it necessarily follows, that he constantly and absolutely governs the *moral* as well as the *natural* world. All denominations of

Christians are agreed in the belief, that God governs the sun and moon, the earth, and all material objects, in all their motions, revolutions, and effects, by his constant and powerful agency. But with respect to the moral world many imagine, that God only upholds moral agents in existence, and preserves their active powers without exerting any influence upon their wills, which move them to act, in every instance, according to his own pleasure. If it were possible, however, for moral agents to act, without any divine influence upon their wills, as some suppose, it is easy to perceive, that their actions would be solely their own, and could not in any sense be ascribed to God, nor considered as under his providential control. But since mind cannot *act*, any more than matter can *move*, without a divine agency, it is absurd to suppose, that men can be left to the freedom of their own will, to act or not to act, independently of divine influence. There must be therefore, the exercise of divine agency in every human action, without which it is impossible to conceive, that God should govern moral agents, and make mankind act in perfect conformity to his own designs. This is the only Scriptural representation of divine providence; and according to this representation, it is easy to see, that all actions, as well as all events, may be traced up to the overruling hand of God. Pious men of old had this just and full view of divine providence. Joseph ascribed the whole series of actions and events, from the time he had his extraordinary dreams, to the time he made himself known to his brethren, to the hand of God. Job ascribed all the evil as well as all the good he experienced to divine providence, though he knew that Satan and his agents were concerned in his afflictions. All the good

and all the evil which takes place in this world, takes place under the providence of God, and therefore his hand is to be seen and acknowledged in every event, without a single exception. None can have a full and just idea of the universality and perfection of divine providence, without considering God as governing all moral agents in all their moral conduct, by a powerful and irresistible influence. It is a gross absurdity to suppose, that the providence of God is more extensive than his agency, or that he ever governs men, without exerting a positive influence over them.

4. If it be true, that all the actions of men may be ascribed to God as well as tothemselves; then it is proper to submit to God under all the evils which he brings upon us, by the agency of created beings. Whenever they act, they act under his influence, and according to his providential will. If they do us evil, he is the primary cause of the evil, and his hand, and his heart, and his counsel, are to be seen and submissively acknowledged. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? No evil can come to a city, a family, or person, without the divine agency. God sometimes brings natural evils upon mankind by his own hand alone, and sometimes by the hands of his creatures. All will allow, that we ought to submit to God under the afflictions, which come immediately from his holy and righteous hand. But it is no less evident, that we ought to submit, when he makes use of the most malignant agents to punish or purify us. Agreeably to this the apostle Peter observes, "Servants, be subject to your masters, with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thank-worthy if a man *for conscience toward God* endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?

but if ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable to God." Whether we are afflicted by Satan, or by the instrumentality of wicked men, we have the same reason for submission, as when we are more immediately corrected by God himself; because neither Satan, nor wicked men, can do us any harm, but under the agency of Him, who governs their hearts and hands. When Job was so severely afflicted by Satan and the servants of Satan, he ascribed his afflictions to God, and cordially submitted to his will, who had made use of those instruments to chastise him. When David was insulted and abused by Shimei, he said the Lord had bidden him; and therefore submitted to God, without the least murmur or complaint. If we always thus viewed the hand of God in all the evils, which we receive from our fellow creatures, we should feel the propriety of silence and submission under all the natural evils and calamities which fall upon us.

5. If the actions of men may be ascribed to God as well as to themselves; then God will be glorified by all their conduct. Whether they have a good or bad intention in acting, God has always a good design, in causing them to act in the manner they do. Joseph had a good design in visiting his brethren, and in conducting with propriety, under both the smiles and frowns of providence; and God had a good design in guiding the motions of his heart and the actions of his life. So that God will be forever glorified by the life and conduct of Joseph. Joseph's brethren had a malevolent intention in abusing him, and finally selling him into Egypt; but God had a good design in both foretelling and guiding their wicked actions. So that God will be glorified by all their conduct. And since God equally governs all the actions of all men, wheth-

er good or bad, he must be glorified by the conduct of the whole human race. All the wrath, all the malice, all the revenge, all the injustice, and all the selfishness, as well as all the benevolence of mankind, must finally praise him, or serve to display the beauty and glory of his character. His intention and his agency, which always goes before theirs, and which is always wise and benevolent, turns all their conduct to his own glory. At the great and last day, when all human hearts shall be unfolded and all human conduct displayed, the hand and counsel of God will appear in all, and shine the brighter by every act of disobedience and rebellion in his creatures. Their bad intentions will be a foil, to display the glory of God to the best advantage.

6. If the actions of men may be ascribed both to God and to themselves; then we may see the duty and nature of true repentance. When men freely and voluntarily do evil, their conduct is their own, and they are the criminal agents. They freely and actively violate their obligations to obedience, which is in its own nature sinful, and for which they ought to repent. Their criminality does not consist in the *cause* of their evil desires, affections, designs, and volitions, but in their evil desires, affections, designs, and volitions themselves. These are all as much their own, and as really criminal, as if God had had no concern, influence, or agency in their production; and they are under as real and strong obligation to repent, as if they had acted independently of every being in the universe. But since all their sinful conduct may be ascribed to God, who ordained it for his own glory, and whose agency was concerned in it, they have no reason to be sorry, that any evil action or event took place. This is so far from being implied in true repentance, that it is altogether inconsistent with it. So Joseph supposed in the case

of his brethren. "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: For God did send me before you to preserve life." God had a good design in governing the sinful conduct of Joseph's brethren; and when they saw this good design happily accomplished, they could have no ground to regret the taking place of that series of actions and events, by which it was brought about. They could not have been sorry for this, without being sorry for God's conduct, and for the accomplishment of his holy and benevolent design; which would have been totally inconsistent with godly sorrow for their own sins. God was not sorry, that their sinful conduct had taken place, and they had no more reason to be sorry, on that account. When they really repented (as we know they did) they loathed and abhorred themselves for sin itself, and not for its taking place, under the divine government. This is the very language of their hearts, when they were brought to repentance. "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us; and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us." They saw the intrinsic turpitude, malignity, and criminality of their intentions and designs, and with self-reproach, self-loathing, and self-condemnation, acknowledged their just desert of punishment from the hand of God. This was genuine repentance and godly sorrow, and essentially different from a sorrow, that their sins had taken place, and that God's design had been accomplished. The apostle Paul makes this distinction between godly sorrow and the sorrow of the world, in his description of true repentance. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." The sorrow of

the world, is the sorrow that arises from an event's taking place; and this worketh death, because there is no remedy for it. If we ought to be sorry, all things considered, that any event has taken place, then it is utterly impossible, that either God, or his holy creatures, can be completely blessed. But if there be no cause to be sorry, all things considered, that any action or event has taken place; then sinners may loath and abhor their sins, as God loaths and abhors them, and yet be completely happy. Godly sorrow, or true repentance, is not only consistent with, but absolutely necessary to, the highest happiness of sinners. While they condemn and loath their own conduct, they may rejoice forever in the conduct of God towards themselves, and all other dependent beings.

Finally, if it be true, that the actions of men may be properly ascribed both to God and to themselves; then it is of great importance for mankind to believe and acknowledge this truth. It runs through the whole Bible, and stands inseparably connected with all God's conduct towards his creatures, and with all their conduct towards him and one another. It is so far from casting any darkness or obscurity over the Scriptures, that it throws peculiar light upon all the doctrines and duties of the gospel, and upon all the works of God and man, in the dispensations of providence and grace. While we see the consistency of human and divine agency in all the actions of men, we can read the sacred volume with great edification and delight, and clearly discern the heart and hand of both God and man in all the small as well as great events, which take place in the world. But without seeing and believing this truth, not only the world, but the Bible, must appear to us full of darkness and mystery, which it will be out of our power to penetrate or remove.

It is, therefore, of as much importance to see and believe the connexion and consistency of divine agency in human actions, as it is, to see God, ourselves, and all intelligent beings, in a clear and true light; and to know how we ought to feel and conduct towards them. It is only in the view of this truth, that all holy creatures will be the most completely happy, and all unholy ones the most completely miserable, through the boundless ages of eternity. It highly behoves every person to look into and understand this most interesting subject. It will be no excuse to say, that he cannot understand it, while he neglects to examine it with a fixt, deliberate, and impartial attention. Those who do not know and love it in this world, must know and hate it forever, which will be the consummation of their future misery.

SERMON III.

MEN HAVE A NATURAL, BUT NOT A MORAL POWER, TO PREVENT WHAT GOD HAS DECREED.

Acts xxvii, 31.

Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

THE history of Paul's voyage to Italy, is one of the most affecting and instructive narratives in the word of God. It displays his power, wisdom, and goodness, in governing the winds and waves, and the hearts and hands of men, in the most trying and distressing circumstances. Paul set sail in company with nearly three hundred persons, for a dangerous voyage in a dangerous season of the year, and in direct opposition to his own opinion and advice. These ominous circumstances undoubtedly spread a gloom over the minds of the whole company, and made them leave the last sight of land, with heavy hearts. Though the weather was in their favour at first; yet there soon arose a tempestuous wind, which obliged them to lighten the ship, and commit themselves to the mercy of the waves. While they were in this situation, neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and the storm continued and increased, until all hope of safety was lost. At length, Paul stood up and addressed their desponding minds, in this pathetick and consoling language: "Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me

this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve; saying, Fear not Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God that it will be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island." "But, when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country; and sounded, and found it twenty fathoms. Then fearing lest they should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for day. And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour, as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, *Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved.*" This seasonable and solemn address had the desired effect, and proved the occasion of saving the lives of the whole company. For they complied with his advice, and took every precaution which their dangerous situation required. "And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to the land." This is the connexion of the words of the text; and in this connexion they plainly imply, that those who sailed with Paul, had *natural power* to frustrate the decrees of God. For he had decreed that Paul should stand before Cæsar; and that those who were with him in the shipwreck, should get safe to land. But yet, if the sailors had left the ship, as they once intended, they would have frustrated these divine purposes. For notwithstanding God had revealed these purposes to Paul, and he firmly believed they should be fulfilled; yet he expressly said to the centurion and to the soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved."

These words, in this connexion, plainly convey this general idea, that whatever God decrees shall take place, by the instrumentality of men, they have natural power to prevent. If this point can be clearly illustrated and established, it will serve to throw light upon some important and interesting subjects. Accordingly, I shall endeavour to make it appear,

I. That God does decree, that some things shall take place, by the instrumentality of men.

II. That such things shall certainly take place. And yet,

III. That men have natural power to prevent their taking place.

I. It is too plain to be denied, that God does decree, that some things shall take place, by the instrumentality of men. We know, that he determined to preserve Noah and his family in the general deluge; and he employed not only their agency, but the agency of many others, to effect his purpose. He predicted the preservation of Jacob and his family in a time of famine; and he employed Joseph to bring about the event. He determined to lead the children of Israel from the house of bondage to the land of promise; and he employed Moses, and Aaron, and Joshua, as the principal agents, to accomplish his design. He decreed to overthrow the Babylonian, Persian, and Grecian empires in succession; and he carried into execution his purposes, by the instrumentality of Cyrus, Alexander, and Augustus Cæsar. He determined, that Christ should be crucified; and he brought about the great and important event, by means of many wicked hearts and wicked hands. He determined, that the gospel of Christ should be speedily spread; and he qualified and disposed Peter, and his fellow apostles, to propagate it through all Judea. He determined, that it should

have a wider spread; and he raised up Paul to preach the glad tidings of salvation to the heathen world. And in connexion with this, he determined, that he should be carried to Rome, by means of a certain ship, and the instrumentality of certain sailors. These instances, and many more which the sacred writers have recorded, clearly prove, that God does decree to bring about the common events of providence, by the instrumentality of men. I proceed to show,

II. That whatever God has decreed to bring to pass, by the instrumentality of men, shall certainly take place. There is no room to doubt, whether that will take place, which God has determined to bring to pass by his own hand. This is so plain, that those who deny the doctrine of divine decrees in general, profess to believe, that God has decreed his own actions, and will most certainly act as he has determined to act. But many pretend to doubt, whether every thing, which God has decreed to be done, by human agency, will eventually come to pass. They suppose, therefore, there must be some uncertainty, with respect to such events as God determines to bring to pass, by human agency. But if God has decreed to bring about some events, by human agency, it is absolutely certain, that such agency will be exerted, and such events will exist. For, the divine decree always fixes the certainty of whatever is decreed, by establishing an infallible connexion between the means and the end. This is the difference between divine foreknowledge and decree. Foreknowledge does not *make* any future event, certain, but only *proves* that it is certain; whereas a decree *makes* a future event certain, by constituting an infallible connexion between the event decreed, and the cause or means of its coming to pass. When God decreed, that Paul and his company

should get safe to land, he fixed an infallible connexion between their safety, and the exertion of the sailors who managed the ship. And it was this infallible connexion between the means and the end, which rendered this deliverance absolutely certain before it took place. Paul believed what the angel of God told him, and entertained no doubt of arriving safe to land, while danger stared him in the face on every side. His faith was founded upon the divine decree, which formed an infallible connexion between his safety and the means to bring it to pass. And upon the ground of this infallible connexion between the means and end, God represents the accomplishment of all his decrees as absolutely certain. "I am God, and there is none like me: declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." David declares, "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever. The thoughts of his heart to all generations." And Solomon asserts, "There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord." And again he says, "There are many devises in man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." Men have often attempted to frustrate the divine decrees, but have never succeeded. Joseph's brethren endeavoured to defeat the divine purposes, but all their efforts served to bring them to pass. Pharaoh attempted to defeat the divine designs, but was made the active instrument of carrying them into execution. Ahab vainly imagined, that he could elude the divine decree, but met the arrow decreed to destroy him. No instance can be found of men's frustrating the decrees of God. Indeed, he challenges them to do this, if they can. "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass,

and as I have purposed, so shall it stand." And he said to his disobedient people, who went into Egypt with a design to frustrate his prediction, "Ye shall know whose words shall stand, *mine*, or *yours*." It is absolutely certain, that whatever God has decreed shall take place, whether with, or without, human agency, shall infallibly come to pass; because in all cases, his decree has established an inseparable connexion between the means and the end. If men are the means decreed, they shall as certainly as any other means decreed, contribute to the end, and eventually bring it to pass. But yet,

III. Those events which God has decreed to bring about, by the instrumentality of men, they have natural power to prevent. Though God had decreed and predicted, that Paul should stand before Cæsar, and that all who sailed with him should arrive safe to land; yet these very men had natural power to prevent the fulfilment of the divine decree and prediction. If the centurion and soldiers had suffered the sailors to leave the ship, which they had natural power to do, it would have proved the destruction of the whole company. Or if the soldiers had killed all the prisoners, as they proposed, and as they might have have done, Paul would not have stood before Cæsar, as God had decreed. And though it was decreed, that the ship and loading should be lost in the storm; yet this damage might have been prevented, if the master and owner of the ship would have hearkened to Paul. So he expressly told them, when it was too late to rectify their error. Though God decreed, that Noah should build the ark, and save his family, yet he had natural power to neglect that work, and so to frustrate that divine purpose. Though God decreed, that Joseph should preserve his father's family in Egypt during the famine, yet he had natural power and opportunity to destroy,

instead of preserving them, and so to prevent the event decreed and predicted. Though God decreed, that Hazael should kill the king his master; yet he had natural power to refrain from that traitorous deed, and so to prevent the evil, which God had determined and declared should exist. Though God decreed, that Judas should betray Christ; yet he had natural power to refrain from that action, to which he was bribed by the Jews and tempted by Satan, and so to counteract the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. In these instances, there can be no doubt but that those, who fulfilled, had natural power to frustrate the divine purposes, which depended upon their agency. And now to make it appear, that this is true in all cases, I would observe,

1. That when God decrees, that any event shall be brought about, by the instrumentality of men, he always decrees, that they shall have natural power to fulfil his decree. This must be extremely plain to every one; for we cannot suppose, that God should decree, that any event should be brought about, by human agents incapable of bringing it about. But no man is capable of doing that which he has not natural power to do. When God decreed, that Hazael should destroy his royal master, he decreed, that Hazael should have both health and strength, to perform the traitorous deed, for had he been deprived of these, he could not have fulfilled the divine decree. This holds in all cases, in which a decreed event depends upon the instrumentality of men. The decree of God is so far from taking away the natural power of those, who are appointed to execute it, that it always secures that power. The decree which made it certain, that Judas should betray Christ, made it equally certain, that he should have natural power to perpetrate that crime; so that it was

certain, that he should neither take away his own life, nor have it taken away, before he had actually betrayed his Master. For God to decree, that men should be instrumental in bringing some particular event to pass; and yet not decree to give them natural power to do what was necessary on their part to do, would be the same, as to decree that that event should not take place. It must, therefore, be admitted, that men always have natural power to do whatever God has decreed they shall do. But,

2. When men have natural power to do any thing, they always have natural power to neglect it. Nothing can be plainer, than that those who have a natural power to act, have the same natural power to refrain from acting. The seamen and master of the ship, who had natural power to set sail, had the same natural power to desist from that rash conduct, according to the good advice of Paul. The soldiers, who had natural power to guard the prisoners, had the same natural power to neglect their duty, and let them escape. So that it always holds true, that when God gives men natural power to fulfil his decrees, they have the same natural power to neglect to fulfil them. Hence,

3. Men always have natural power to frustrate those divine decrees, which they are appointed to fulfil. God decreed, that Paul and his company should get safe to land, by the instrumentality of the sailors; but they had natural power to frustrate that decree. So Paul told the centurion and the soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved." The sailors were about to leave the ship, and to neglect affording the company that assistance which was decreed, and which was absolutely necessary to preserve the lives of the passengers. This they had natural

power to neglect, and had they neglected it, they would have frustrated the divine decree. As it is always true, that men have natural power to fulfil any decree, which they are appointed to fulfil; so it is equally true, that they always have the same natural power to prevent the fulfilment of it. Their not acting, in every such case, would as effectually frustrate the purpose of God, as their acting would fulfil his purpose. And since he always gives men natural power to fulfil his decrees, they always have the same natural power to defeat them. This all those are conscious of, who attempt to frustrate his designs. Joseph's brethren thought they had natural power to defeat the divine purpose. Ahab, when he went to Ramoth-Gilead, had the same opinion. The soldiers supposed they had natural power to kill Paul, as they proposed, to prevent his escape. And all men are conscious that they have natural power to neglect whatever they have natural power to do. It hence follows, that men have, and know they have natural power to frustrate those decrees of God, whose accomplishment depends upon their agency.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. Since men always fulfil those decrees of God, which they have natural power to frustrate, we must suppose, that he always makes them willing to act agreeably to his decrees. Two things are absolutely necessary in order to men's acting; one is to be able, and the other is to be willing. By being able is meant a natural power to act, and by being willing a moral power to act. Whatever God determines men shall do, he not only gives them a natural, but moral power to do: and when he gives them both a natural and moral power to do any thing, they are under a moral

necessity of doing it. Hence there is always both a *natural possibility*, and a *moral impossibility*, of their defeating the divine purposes. In one sense it is always true, that men *can* defeat the designs of God; and in another sense it is always equally true, that they *cannot* defeat his designs. This distinction between natural and moral power, natural and moral necessity, and natural and moral impossibility, is agreeable to common sense, and to the whole tenor of Scripture; and fully accounts for men's always fulfilling those purposes of God, which they have natural power to frustrate. Though God knows, that mankind have natural power to act contrary to his designs; yet he knows, that he is able to make them willing to fulfil his purposes, and that he has determined to make them willing; and hence he knows, that they always will fulfil his purposes, by voluntarily performing those actions, which he has determined they shall perform. God has the hearts of all men in his hand, and can turn them whithersoever he pleases, as the rivers of water are turned. And it is by operating upon their hearts, that he makes them the voluntary instruments of fulfilling those purposes of his, which they have natural power to counteract and defeat.

2. If men always have natural power to frustrate as well as fulfil the decrees of God; then they always act freely in fulfilling his decrees. If they were willing as well as able to defeat his purposes, they certainly would defeat them. Was there ever an instance known of a man's being both able and willing to do an action, and neglecting to do it? Or can we even conceive of a man's being both able and willing to do an action, and yet neglecting to do it? It is just as impossible to conceive of such a case of neglect, as to conceive of an effect without a cause. When a man

is both able and willing to act, there is a sufficient cause for his acting; but no cause at all for his neglecting to act. Hence it is absolutely certain, that men always act freely, while they act agreeably to the divine purposes, which they are able to frustrate, because no reason can be given, why they act agreeably to those divine purposes, but that they choose to act agreeably to them. If the decrees of God prevented men from acting voluntarily, they would indeed destroy their free agency; but since they are consistent with their acting voluntarily, they are entirely consistent with their moral freedom. Paul and all those who sailed with him in their voyage to Italy, acted agreeably to the decrees of God, yet they acted freely, because they acted voluntarily, in every instance of their conduct. Accordingly, when they arrived to land, Paul told them, that they ought to have hearkened to him, and that if they had hearkened to him, as they might have done notwithstanding the divine decree, they would have escaped the harm and loss, which they had unhappily sustained. This instance demonstrates, that the decrees of God respecting the conduct of men, are perfectly consistent with their free agency in fulfilling his decrees.

3. If men have natural power to frustrate as well as to fulfil the decrees of God; then the non-elect have as fair an opportunity of being saved as the elect. The decree of reprobation leaves them in the full possession of all their natural power to choose or refuse the offers of mercy. They have as much strength, and as fair an opportunity to embrace the gospel, as the elect have, before they embrace it. This may be clearly exemplified in the case of Judas, who was reprobated; and of Paul, who was elected. They were both, for a long time, in a state of impenitence and unbelief. Judas in that state was as able to embrace

the gospel, as Paul was in the same state. Paul acted freely in rejecting the gospel, and as freely in embracing it; and Judas, if he had pleased, might have done the same. Though he refused the overtures of mercy and betrayed his Master; yet after all, instead of destroying his own life, he might have repented and obtained forgiveness, notwithstanding the divine decree to the contrary. And this is true, in regard to all the non-elect. God has provided an atonement for them, as well as for the elect. He offers salvation to them as well as to the elect. He commands them to accept of salvation, as well as the elect. He promises salvation to them, if they will accept it, as well as to the elect. Why then do they not enjoy as fair an opportunity to obtain eternal life, as the elect? If they perish, they must necessarily perish, by their own choice. God places all under the gospel, in such a situation, that the gospel must necessarily save them, if they only choose to be saved. The servant who received one talent, was as able to improve it, and to obtain a reward from his master, as those who received and improved more talents. Those who were first invited to the gospel feast, and refused to go, were as able to go, as those were who went, and enjoyed the entertainment. The non-elect will forever feel, that they might have gone to heaven, if they had chosen to go to that holy and happy place; and that their own choice, and not the decree of reprobation shut them out of the kingdom of glory. And this will constrain them to justify God in freely offering salvation to them, and in condemning them for rejecting his gracious invitations.

4. If men have natural power to frustrate as well as to fulfil the decrees of God; then there is a propriety in the warnings, cautions, and admonitions given to saints against falling away. Many imagine that such exhortations are inconsistent with the certainty of their

final perseverance. We firmly believe, that all those whom God has given to Christ in the covenant of redemption, shall certainly be renewed, sanctified, and saved. But if this be true, many are ready to ask, Why should real saints be cautioned against falling away, and threatened with final ruin, if they should fall away? This subject furnishes a complete answer to this question. It is because they have natural power to frustrate the divine decrees. They have natural power to apostatize from the faith, as well as to persevere in it. There is, therefore, a natural possibility of their falling away; and this natural possibility of falling away creates danger; and where there is danger, cautions and warnings against it, are altogether proper and necessary. Men may be in danger of an evil, which it is certain they shall eventually escape. It was after Paul had been divinely assured, that he and his company should get safe to land, that he said to the centurion and to the soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." This implies, that the certainty of their safety was consistent with the danger of their being lost. Paul was chosen from eternity to be a believer and a preacher of the gospel; but while he remained an enemy to Christ and to his followers, there was danger of his never becoming either a believer or preacher. And after he became a believer and a preacher, he tells us, that he still considered himself in danger of being finally cast away. Believers live in the same world, in which they lived, before they believed; they are surrounded by the same spiritual enemies, by which they were surrounded, before they believed; and they have the same natural power to renounce the gospel, which they had to reject it, before they believed; hence they stand in peculiar need of cautions and warnings, to resist the devil, to overcome the world, to keep themselves in the love of God, to watch

and pray against temptations, and at all times, and under all circumstances, to take heed lest they fall. Such warnings and cautions are not only proper, but necessary means, to keep saints from falling, and to conduct them safely to the kingdom of heaven.

Finally, since God has determined to bring about great and important events by the instrumentality of men, it is of great importance, that they should be active and diligent in carrying into execution his wise and holy designs. The means to promote any end, are as necessary as the end to be promoted. It was as necessary, that the shipmen should be restrained from leaving the ship, as that the lives of all on board should be saved. By employing men as means, in carrying on his designs, God has made human agency extremely necessary and important. He has put it into the power of men to do unspeakable good, while they are acting their parts in this probationary state. How eminently useful were the patriarchs, the prophets, and other good men, before the gospel day; and how much more good have the apostles, the ministers, and the followers of Christ done since! The field of usefulness is continually opening wider and wider. God has let us know, that he has determined to extend his kingdom through the world, by the instrumentality of human agents. A door is open for all men of every age, character, and condition, to employ all their abilities, to bring about the most desirable and important events. All who cordially co-operate with God in fulfilling his purposes, shall meet with final success and an ample reward. These are the strongest motives to exertion, that can be presented to the minds of men. And in the view of these, let all be steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. Amen.

SERMON IV.

THE SCRIPTURAL ACCOUNT OF THE DEVIL OUGHT TO BE BELIEVED.

1 Pet. v, 8.

Be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.

IT is generally unwise to despise our enemies, because it prevents that vigilance, which is necessary to defeat their evil designs. We often suffer more from those whom we contemn, than from those whom we fear. And, perhaps, mankind in general receive much greater injuries from their common enemy, whose power and malice they vainly deride, than from all their other enemies put together. Some are ready to doubt the existence of their adversary the Devil, and consider him merely as a creature of the imagination; while others who believe his existence commonly speak of him in the most familiar terms of reproach and contempt. But if he does really exist, and possess all that malevolence, which is ascribed to him in the text; then he is certainly much more to be feared than despised. And since all men are more or less exposed to his destructive influence, it concerns them to form just apprehensions of his power and disposition to deceive and destroy them. It is proposed, therefore, in the following discourse, to give the scriptural account of the Devil, and make it appear, that we ought to believe that account.

1. Let us consider the scriptural account of the Devil. This common enemy of mankind is more fre-

quently mentioned in the Bible, than any other particular person or agent, except the man Christ Jesus. He is called by a great variety of appellations. More than fifty times he is called the Devil. More than forty times he is called Satan. And he is very often designated by several other names: such as the Accuser of the brethren, Apollyon, Angel of the bottomless pit, Prince of darkness, Prince of devils, and the God of this world. Nor do the sacred writers merely mention his names, but fully describe his origin, his character, and his conduct.

1. They represent him as an apostate angel. The scripture clearly reveals the apostasy of angels. The apostle Peter says, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." And the apostle Jude gives a similar representation. "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Satan, the head and leader of these apostates, originally belonged to a high and holy order of beings. But what his first offence was, we are not expressly told in his history. Some, however, have conjectured, that his first sin consisted in refusing to obey Christ as Mediator, and to minister to those who were to be heirs of salvation. And this idea seems to be suggested by several texts of Scripture. Christ speaking of the Devil in the eighth chapter of John says, "He abode not in the truth," that is, he was not steadfast in obedience to Him, who was the way, the truth, and the life. And this disobedient temper he might manifest, when the Father said concerning the Son, "Let all the angels of God worship him." If, on that occasion, Satan did refuse to bow to the Mediator, it seems his first

sin must have been pride; which appears to be intimated in the apostle's words to Timothy. "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." It is certain, however, that Satan once belonged to the highest order of created beings, and was, perhaps, the highest of that order. But by pride or some other offence, he apostatized from God, and led others to apostatize from him; for which he was doomed, with his followers, to a state of everlasting darkness and despair. But notwithstanding his loss of holiness and happiness, he still retains that superior power and intelligence with which he was originally created.

2. The scripture represents the Devil, as an invisible agent in this world. He is said to be a *Spirit*, which denotes his invisibility. He is likewise represented as taking possession of the minds of men, and invisibly governing their thoughts and actions. But though he is naturally invisible to human eyes, yet he is capable, as well as the angels of light, of assuming a material vehicle, and of becoming visible to mankind. It seems, he appeared to Adam and Eve in a visible form. But we are not to suppose, that God ever permits him to assume a bodily shape, unless it be on some peculiar occasion, to answer some special purpose of providence. It is true, he is represented in the text as a roaring lion; but this is to be understood figuratively. As an angel he is a spirit, and as a spirit he is naturally invisible, and, in his common intercourse with mankind, acts in an invisible manner; though he may occasionally put on a human or some other visible appearance.

3. The scripture represents the Devil, as the head of all the apostate angels. We are not informed how many of the heavenly hosts apostatized from God;

but there is reason to believe, that the number was great. When our Lord asked an unclean spirit his name, he replied, "My name is legion: for we are many." This account agrees with what the apostle says concerning the various ranks of fallen angels. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities. against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Among these various orders of apostate spirits, he, who is emphatically called *the devil*, holds the highest. This is frequently intimated in scripture. When our Saviour cast a devil out of a dumb man, the pharisees said, "He casteth out devils through the *prince* of devils." And they said on another occasion, "This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the *prince* of devils." A similar remark was made by those, who saw Christ cast out a devil that was dumb. They said, "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the *chief* of devils." But he knowing their thoughts said unto them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall *his* kingdom stand?" Here Christ seems to confirm the common opinion among the Jews, that *the Devil* is a chief or a prince, who reigns supreme in his own kingdom.

4. The scripture represents the Devil, as being conversant in this world, and exerting his power and influence here. The author of the book of Job says, "When the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came also among them." And when the Lord asked him whence he came, he answered, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." The apostle gives the same representation of him in the text. "Be sober,

be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." When Christ saw him coming to tempt him, he said, "The prince of *this world* cometh, and hath nothing in me." He also predicted the descent of the Holy Ghost, who should restrain and condemn Satan. "When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of judgment, because the prince of this world, is judged." The Devil has always been roaming through this world, and as the prince of the power of the air, produced winds, and storms, and other natural evils, to afflict mankind, and carry on his malignant opposition to Christ and the interests of his kingdom. He has already spread misery and destruction far and wide; and he means, if possible, to ruin the human race. Nor does he act alone, but causes all his subjects to co-operate in all his malevolent purposes. Were all these apostate spirits only visible, they would appear more terrible, than so many ravening wolves. For,

5. The scripture represents the Devil, and consequently his subjects, as perfectly malevolent. This is the character given of him in the text. "Your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." He is called an evil spirit, a foul spirit, an unclean spirit, a liar, a murderer, a tormentor, a destroyer. Yea, he is represented as the perfection of malignity. When Christ would paint sinners in the blackest colour, he compares them with this impure spirit. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." And when the apostle would represent the bitterest passions of human nature in the most odious light, he calls them "earthly, sensual, *devilish*." God's conduct towards Satan, and towards all other beings, has imbit-

tered his mind, and filled his selfish heart with the highest degree of envy, malice, and revenge.

6. The scripture represents this Enemy of all righteousness, as having access to the minds of men, and possessing a power of tempting their hearts, and leading them into all manner of moral evil. We are told that he tempted our first parents to eat of the forbidden fruit; that he led the posterity of Noah to forget and forsake God; that he provoked David to number Israel; that he seduced many of the people of God into idolatry; that he tempted Christ in the wilderness; that he put it into the heart of Judas to betray him; that he filled the heart of Ananias to lie unto the Holy Ghost. He is called the spirit, that worketh in the children of disobedience. He is said to blind the minds of them that believe not. And it is predicted, that he shall in time to come, go out to deceive the nations, which are in the four quarters of the earth. Hence God repeatedly and solemnly warns men to guard themselves against his wiles and temptations. Timothy is divinely directed to instruct such as oppose the gospel, "that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." Paul exhorts himself and his christian brethren to exercise mutual forgiveness, "Lest, says he, Satan should get an advantage against us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." To the Ephesians he says, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit,

which is the word of God." The apostle James also warns christians against the assaults of Satan. "Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." The duty and importance of such caution and resistance, the apostle Peter solemnly urges in the text. "Be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." All these warnings and admonitions necessarily suppose that the Devil has access to the minds of men, and continually employs all his power and subtilty to seduce and destroy them. I proceed to show,

II. That we ought to believe this account of the Devil. It is a just and scriptural account. Nothing fabulous or fictitious has been mentioned. It appears from the whole current of Scripture that the Devil was originally an angel of light; that he retains his angelick nature and high rank among the apostate spirits; and that he is invisibly present in this world, where he has access to the minds of men, and employs every artifice to destroy them. That this scriptural account of the devil is worthy of belief, will appear from the following considerations.

1. It is God's account, whose knowledge and veracity are unquestionable. He was as able to give us the history of the Devil, as the history of Adam, or Noah, or Abraham, or any other person, whom he has recorded in his word. He knew Satan from the beginning of his existence, and was able to give a true account of his primitive state, of his first apostacy, and of his conduct towards Adam and all his posterity to the end of time. He has not, indeed, revealed all that he might have revealed concerning this first apostate; but what he has revealed must be infallibly true, and demand universal belief.

2. There is the same ground to believe the scriptural account of the Devil, as there is to believe the scriptural account of the Angels, who kept their first estate. His history and theirs come from the same Author, and are extremely similar. Are they represented as spirits? so is he. Are they represented as superior to men? so is he. Are they represented as invisible? so is he. Are they represented as having intercourse with this world? so is he. Are they represented as promoting the cause of Christ? he is represented as opposing it. But here it is worthy of remark, that God has given a more full and particular history of the Devil and his angels, than he has of the principalities and powers above. In some respects, therefore, his history is worthy of more attention and regard than theirs. But many profess to believe their existence and agency, who doubt the existence and agency of Satan. This is highly absurd. If we ought to believe what God says concerning the Angels of light, we ought, by no means, to call in question what he says concerning our adversary the Devil.

3. The history of this destroyer is altogether credible, because it is completely interwoven with the history of the Saviour. The first account of the Devil stands immediately connected with the first account of Christ. The sacred historian first relates the agency of the Devil in the seduction and ruin of man; and then introduces the Mediator, who should destroy the works of the Devil, by restoring man to the divine favour. At the same time, it is foretold, that there should be a constant contest between Satan and Christ, until the latter should finish the work of redemption. And according to the history of the Devil, he has been continually opposing Christ and his cause in the world; and he will persist in his opposition until the work of

redemption is completed, and the final sentence is passed upon the impenitent at the last day: "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Thus the history of the Devil is interwoven with the scriptural account of all the most important events, which have taken place, from the beginning of time, and which shall take place till time is no more. Indeed his history is inseparably connected with the whole history of the Bible, and cannot be rejected, without destroying the credibility of all sacred history. If we must believe any thing recorded in the Bible, we certainly must believe the history of the Devil, which stands upon the broad foundation of divine revelation in general: especially if we consider once more,

4. That there is nothing absurd in the scriptural account of the Devil. We can form clear and distinct ideas of such a being as the Devil is represented to be. We can conceive of God as an invisible spirit; we can conceive of angels as invisible spirits; and we can conceive of our own souls as invisible spirits; we can, therefore, as easily conceive of the spirituality and invisibility of Satan. Nor is it less easy to conceive of his perfect malignity. This is the very disposition of our world, which lies in wickedness. But it is often said, that there is something absurd and incredible in the account of the Devil's tempting mankind to sin. This part of his history, however, coroborates and establishes the whole. Why should the Devil be once mentioned in the Bible, if he were only an idle spectator of human affairs? Or why should so many warnings and admonitions be given to mankind to avoid and resist the influence, if he had no power to lead them into temptation? But if, on the other hand, he is their grand adversary, who is continually seeking to seduce and destroy them; then there is a great propriety in

their being so repeatedly and solemnly cautioned to resist his dangerous assaults.

But to come more directly to the point, I would observe, that we often experience something as difficult to explain, as the temptations of Satan. While our external senses are completely locked up, in a dream, we can see persons, and converse with them, and distinguish their features and dress. This is something more than barely thinking of such persons at a distance, while we are awake, and something extremely hard to account for. It is, perhaps, quite as easy to conceive how Satan should suggest thoughts to our minds, without the aid of our external senses, while we are awake; as to conceive how any agent should be able to make us see, and hear, and converse, in our sleep. Whoever can give a clear and rational account of dreaming, we doubt not, can give as clear and rational account of the power of Satan to suggest temptations to the human mind. But however mysterious it may be, that Satan should have access to our minds, yet it seems to be confirmed by daily experience. Why is the chain of our thoughts so often and so suddenly broken? Why do new, unconnected, and unexpected thoughts so frequently rush into our minds? Why do thoughts, which the mind abhors and endeavours to banish forever, so repeatedly and repeatedly recur? These things favour the account, which the scripture gives of Satan's tempting power over us. And they afford all the evidence of it, that we could expect to have from actual experience. We cannot suppose that the operations of an invisible agent should be sensibly perceived, but only the effects of his operations; and these are, perhaps, very generally and sensibly perceived. But whether we perceive the effects of Satan's agency upon our minds or not,

or whether we can account for his producing such effects or not; there is nothing absurd or contrary to reason and experience, in the plain account, which God has given us, of his seducing influence. God is perfectly acquainted with all the powers of our malicious adversary, and all the avenues to our minds. If Satan can suggest thoughts to us, or paint objects on our imagination. God knows it; and we must believe, that he never would have warned us to resist the Devil, if he had no power to tempt us to evil. In a word, we have no reason to doubt, but every reason to believe the account, which God has given us of the existence, character, and conduct of Satan, who goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. What has been said in this discourse, may serve to expose some false notions, which have been entertained and advanced, concerning the origin and operations of the Devil. Some have supposed, that he is not a created but an uncreated and self-existent Spirit, who has always been opposing the designs and operations of the Creator and Governour of the world. They cannot account for the numerous natural and moral evils, which so generally prevail, without the supposition of an eternal malevolent being, who is the first author of all the sin and misery in the universe. And they refer to several passages of scripture in support of this opinion. It is true, we read in the eighth of John, "He was a murderer *from the beginning*." And in the first epistle of the same apostle, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth *from the beginning*." Again we are told, that the devil is the *god* of this world, and that *he sowed tares* among the wheat, by which are meant wicked men.

None of these texts necessarily imply, that the devil has an underived existence, or omnipotent power. His being a murderer and sinning from the beginning implies nothing more, than his being the *first* sinner and the first tempter to sin. And his sowing tares among the wheat is to be understood figuratively, as denoting his agency in tempting men to wickedness in general, and to a false profession of religion in particular. This appears to be the true construction of the passages of scripture under consideration; and according to this construction, they serve to illustrate and confirm the scriptural account of the devil, which has been given in this discourse.

Some who acknowledge the existence of Satan, seem to think he has little or no concern in leading men into moral evil. They say the native corruption of the human heart will account for all, or nearly all the sins which are committed, without any temptations of the devil. But it ought to be considered, that a general propensity to sin will not lead any person to any particular sin, without a particular motive or temptation to that particular sin. There must always be some objective motive presented to the view of the mind, in order to excite or draw forth the native depravity of the heart. The worst man on earth will neither curse nor swear, neither cheat nor lie, neither steal nor kill, without some particular motive or temptation to commit either of these gross immoralities. Satan knows, therefore, that he has no ground to expect any man will commit any particular sin, which he desires he should commit, unless he suggests a particular motive or temptation to that particular sin. He tempted David to number Israel, because he supposed he would not number them, unless he led him into that sin, by a suitable temptation. He acted in

that case, upon the same ground that wicked men act, when they tempt one another to sin. Though they know each other to be extremely corrupt, yet they think it is necessary to tempt, persuade, and seduce one another to particular acts of wickedness. There is, therefore, just as much occasion for Satan's tempting men to sin, as for their tempting one another. It is true, there may be much moral evil committed, without his agency, since there are so many other objects and agents which may present temptation. But since he actually desires to destroy mankind, we may well suppose, that he employs all his malice and subtilty to involve them in sin and ruin. Still some may say, the Devil is not omnipresent, he cannot be every where at once, nor tempt more than one person at one time; and, therefore, it must be very seldom that he tempts the same person, and never, perhaps, the largest part of mankind. There would be some plausibility in this objection, were there but one evil Spirit to tempt the children of disobedience. But it appears from what has been said, that Satan is at the head of myriads of impure spirits, who are united with him and act under him, in tempting and deceiving the world; and he may employ as many millions in his service, as there are millions of men in this state of probation. If every heir of salvation has a good angel to attend him, as the scripture seems to intimate; why should it be thought absurd to suppose, that there is an evil angel, who occasionally if not constantly attends every impenitent sinner on the face of the earth? There is a perfect consistency in all the scripture says concerning the apostacy of the Devil and his angels, their malignant nature, and destructive influence upon the minds of men; and whoever will fairly and candidly consider the subject, will find every shadow of

objection entirely vanish. Those who indulge doubts and difficulties upon this point, "give place to the Devil," who wishes to keep them in ignorance and unbelief of his devices, that he may lead them captive at his will.

2. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, that the denial of the existence and operations of the Devil directly tends to total infidelity. There are many truths contained in the Bible, which men may disbelieve, without entertaining the least doubt of the plenary Inspiration of that sacred volume. But to deny the truth of what is so plainly and abundantly revealed concerning the existence and agency of Satan, strikes at the root of divine revelation. The history of the Devil is so interwoven with the facts which the scripture records and with the doctrines which it teaches, that whoever denies the existence and agency of that great Adversary, who is said to involve the world in sin and misery, must naturally and necessarily consider the gospel, or the whole scheme of redemption, as a cunningly devised fable. Accordingly we find that Deists, who are professed infidels, openly reject and ridicule the notion of the existence and temptations of Satan. And those who are leaning towards infidelity, such as Universalists and Socinians, call in question not only what the Bible teaches concerning the Devil's tempting the hearts and possessing the minds of men, but also what it declares concerning the existence of evil spirits in general. Reason, observation, and experience unitedly testify, that those, who deny the scriptural account of the Devil, are taking large strides towards complete infidelity. It is, therefore, very alarming, that such an anti-scriptural sentiment is so openly avowed and propagated at the present day of error and delusion. There is just ground

to fear, that many unsanctified and unthinking persons will be entirely ruined, before they even suspect that they are in the path of the destroyer.

3. If the Bible gives a true description of the Devil; then he undoubtedly does all in his power to make men infidels. He knows the gospel has a direct tendency to defeat all his malignant designs, and, unless he can prevent men from believing it, he must inevitably fall before its powerful influence. Our Saviour says he felt this effect, when he sent forth his seventy apostles to preach the gospel in his name. "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." The Devil has, from the beginning of the world to this day, endeavoured to prevent mankind from believing the word of God. By this artifice he ruined our first parents. By this artifice he destroyed Ahab. By this artifice he attempted to deceive Christ himself, and defeat the design of his mediatorial work. As he is an acute and subtile reasoner, so he is capable of suggesting the most sophistical arguments against divine Revelation. His enmity to the gospel naturally prompts him to employ this method to subvert it, whenever he sees any prospect of success. How often does he suggest doubts to the minds of both saints and sinners, respecting the Inspiration of the Scriptures? How often does he help the promoters of infidelity to the most plausible and delusive arguments, to pervert the doctrines and subvert the first principles of Christianity? His agency is often very visible in the writings and reasonings of Infidels. At the present day, the enemies of the gospel appear to be under a more than common influence of the great Deceiver. It seems to be his main object, to spread

infidelity through all the christian world, and his success is extremely great and alarming.

4. If the Devil has such power and inclination to tempt and deceive mankind, as the Scripture represents; then we may learn why they so often go beyond their intentions and expectations in sinning. When they commit a sin once, they have no thought of committing it again; or when they indulge themselves in one sinful practice, they have no thought of going into another. They intend and expect to set bounds to their sinning. This is always the case with young sinners, and not uncommonly the case with declining and backsliding professors. But Satan knows the natural connexion between the beginning and the continuance in sin, and between one course of sinning and another. When he has tempted them to begin iniquity, he knows he has them on his own ground and in his own power, and neglects no opportunity of leading them, step by step into that path, which he imagines will most infallibly prove their ruin. Though they may be, at certain times, alarmed at the progress they have made in sins of omission and commission; yet he can easily allay their fears, and push them on in their usual course of negligence and disobedience. How many has he led from lying to cheating, from cheating to stealing, and from stealing to murder? How many has he led from Arminianism to Arianism, from Arianism to Socinianism, from Socinianism to Deism, and from Deism to Atheism and total Skepticism? And how many has he led in a more insensible way to ruin, by first tempting them to neglect prayer, next reading the Bible, next hearing the gospel preached, and finally the whole concern of their souls? It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to account for the high-handed crimes, the absurd errors,

and the general security and stupidity of mankind under the gospel, without the instrumentality of the Devil, who always lies in wait to destroy them. But it is easy to see how they are carried beyond their intentions, resolutions, and expectations in their sinful ways, through his subtile and powerful temptations. His seductive agency will account for the sins of Adam, Noah, and Lot, Moses, David, and Solomon, Ahitophel, Jeroboam, and Judas, the idolatry of the Heathens, and the degeneracy, delusion, and infidelity of millions in the Christian world.

Finally, this subject admonishes all persons of every age and character, to guard againt the fatal influence of their common adversary the Devil. His invisibility, subtilty, and malignity, render him a most dangerous enemy. He has slain his thousands and ten thousands, and still walks about seeking whom he may devour. None, while they remain in this imperfect state, are beyond the reach of his fiery darts and evil suggestions. Though saints have been turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son; yet they are still exposed to the assaults of the Devil, who wishes to molest, disturb, and injure those, whom he knows he cannot finally destroy. It highly concerns them to use every proper method to resist the Devil, that he may flee from them.

In the first place, let them live in the habitual exercise of sobriety. "Be sober," is the divine direction to christians. While they maintain sobriety, the adversary knows they are guarded within against any temptation he can suggest. But when he sees them in a light and airy humour, he knows they lie open to his malignant influence, and will by no means fail to improve such a favourable opportunity of trying

the strength of their graces, by holding up a temptation exactly suited to the present state of their minds. Whether the levity of christians arises from their natural disposition, or from the company they are called to keep, or from a particular and occasional relaxation of their minds, it always exposes them to the assaults of Satan, who knows when, and where, and to whom to present temptations. He is so well acquainted with mankind in general, and with particular persons, that he can pretty certainly determine, when they are in a state of gravity or levity; and, of consequence, when he can attack them to the best advantage. This ought to excite the children of God, to maintain a constant and habitual sobriety or self-possession, that they may escape or repel the fiery darts of the wicked one.

In the next place, it behoves them to live in the exercise of vigilance as well as sobriety. Hence says the apostle, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." A watchful enemy needs to be watched. Christians should realize, at all times and in all places, that they are continually attended by a subtile and invisible foe, who is incessantly bent upon drawing them into his snares. Here they are extremely apt to fail, and give Satan an advantage of doing them a great deal of mischief. It is for want of caution and vigilance against his influence, that they often suffer so much from him, without knowing from whence the evil comes. They ascribe to other causes, what is the effect of his malignant suggestions. How many doubts, and fears, and anxieties, and follies, and sins, might they escape, by watching over their own hearts, and properly avoiding every thing, which

they have found Satan has employed to lead them astray.

But though sobriety and vigilance will have a great tendency to preserve them from the temptations of the Devil; yet they need something else to defend themselves against his violent assaults. And the best weapon they can possess and employ is the word of God. By this weapon, our Saviour gained the victory in the hour of temptation. Satan quoted Scripture to seduce him from his duty; and Christ quoted Scripture, which at once condemned and defeated his design. Let christians follow this example of the great Captain of their salvation, and foil Satan with his own weapon. Let them diligently read and carefully treasure up the doctrines, the precepts, and the promises of the gospel, that they may always be prepared to discover the devices of the Devil, and resist all his efforts to lead them into the belief of error, or the practice of sin.

Though these are some of the best means they can use to overcome the tempter; yet, if they would ensure success, they must sincerely implore the aid and influence of Him, who is stronger than the strong man armed. It ought to be daily their heart's desire and prayer to God, that he would not "lead them into temptation, but deliver them from evil." He is able to prevent their being tempted above what they are able to bear, and with every temptation to make a way for their escape. In a word, let them seriously ponder and cordially obey the solemn exhortation of the Apostle upon this subject. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against prin-

cipalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."

But the case of sinners is more alarming, and calls for a more solemn admonition to duty. They are dead in trespasses and sins, and wholly under the dominion of the god of this world, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. He is constantly endeavouring to blind their minds, harden their hearts, and stupify their consciences. Hence says the apostle, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." It is in vain to exhort sinners to resist the Devil, who is seeking, not only to injure them in time, but to destroy them in eternity, while they remain his cordial subjects, and unite with him in opposing God and the whole scheme of redemption. Their first and indispensable duty is to renounce the spirit and kingdom of Satan, and cordially embrace the gospel. And as soon as they turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, they will have the power and

grace of the Almighty engaged to guard them from their mortal enemy. But if they will reject the counsel of God against themselves, and walk in the paths of the Destroyer, they must expect to hear that awful sentence denounced against them at the great and last day, "Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

SERMON V.

THE EXHIBITION OF CHRIST TRIES THE HUMAN HEART.

LUKE ii, 34, 35.

And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

THOUGH Christ was born in a low and obscure condition; yet never, perhaps, did two parents in Israel perform the rite of dedication with such emotions of heart, as Joseph and Mary felt, when they appeared in the temple, and publicly consecrated to God their Child, their Saviour, and their Sovereign. At the same time, good old Simeon came in, and raised the tide of their affections. After praising God for the long expected Messiah, and for the opportunity of seeing the young Redeemer, he addressed the mother of our Lord in the words I have read. "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against; that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." It appears from this declaration, which was made under a divine impulse, that it was the design of God, in exhibiting the Son of his love before his people Israel, to try their hearts and fix their final state. And we must suppose, that he means to answer the same important purpose, from age to age, by exhibiting the character and conduct of the blessed Saviour before the minds of men, through the medium of the gospel.

This, therefore, is the truth to be illustrated in the present discourse,

That God exhibits Christ before the minds of men, in order to try their hearts and fix their future state.

This subject naturally divides itself into two branches, which require a distinct consideration.

I. Let us consider, that God exhibits Christ before the minds of men, in order to try their hearts.

1. The truth of this observation appears from what the prophets foretold concerning the feelings and conduct of men towards the Messiah, when he should make his appearance in the flesh, and perform his mediatorial work among them. David predicted, that he would alarm the fears, and awaken the enmity and opposition of the world against him. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." After this, he foretold the language and feelings of Christ under the cruel hands of his implacable enemies. In the name of the suffering Saviour he said, "Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." This was a plain prediction of the feelings and conduct of the crucifiers of Christ, who were highly incensed against him, on account of the doctrines which he taught, and the claims which he made to equality

with the Father. Isaiah also foretold the contempt and cruelty with which Christ would be treated, in the days of his humanity. "He shall grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness: and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our face from him: he was despised, and we esteemed him not. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." The prophets were inspired to foretel these effects of Christ's appearance in the flesh, because God intended, by bringing him into the world, to try the hearts of men, and draw forth those feelings which they really possessed, but were unwilling to acknowledge.

2. It appears from the history of Christ, that he fulfilled the predictions which went before concerning him, and tried the hearts of all, who either heard him preach, or saw his miracles, or were any way acquainted with him. He was a sign universally spoken against. Herod and all Jerusalem were alarmed at the news of his birth, and began to speak and act against him, even before they saw him. When he appeared as a preacher, he tried the hearts of all who attended his public or private discourses. Some said, he spake as never man spake; but others said, he deceived the people. Some heard him gladly; but others heard him with disgust and indignation. Some admired his miracles; but others despised and blasphemed them. Some said, God was with him; but others said, he was assisted by Satan. He tried multitudes by his crucifixion, as well as by his miracles and

preaching. Then, like a sword, he pierced the heart of his mother, and of his peculiar friends and followers. Then, he tried the hearts of the two malefactors, who suffered and died by his side. Then, he tried the hearts of his murderers, and made it appear, that they were more cruel than the savage beasts of prey. Then, he tried the hearts of all the spectators of that solemn scene, who were very differently affected by the awful spectacle of his death. He constrained them all to express their real feelings on that extraordinary occasion. While some railed and some mocked, the centurion glorified God, saying, certainly this was a righteous man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts, and returned. Christ was like a fuller's soap, and a refiner's fire. He tried the hearts of thousands, both while he lived and when he died. He was always saying, or doing something, which had a direct tendency to try the hearts of all his friends and foes.

3. The exhibition of Christ after his death through the medium of the gospel, tried the hearts of the whole Jewish nation. When the day of Pentecost was fully come, and the apostles were properly prepared to exhibit a crucified Saviour, his character impressed the minds and tried the hearts of all who heard them preach. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were universally affected. While thousands believed and rejoiced, fear came upon every soul, who despised and rejected the offers of mercy in the name of Christ. While some rose and some fell; while some were enlightened and some blinded; while some praised and some blasphemed the divine Redeemer, every heart in Jerusalem was tried. After this, the gospel was carried to Samaria, and to all parts of Judea, where it

produced the same different effects, which it had produced in Jerusalem. It tried the hearts of believers and of unbelievers, and completely prepared the nation in general to be cut off and dispersed through the world. The exhibition of Christ, by the gospel, disclosed the secrets of their hearts, demonstrated their blindness, stupidity, and unbelief, which justified God in taking the gospel from them, and sending it to other nations, who would give it a better reception. And when the apostles carried the gospel to other nations, and exhibited the character of Christ before them, he was precious to those who believed; but to those who disbelieved, he was a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. So that he was for the falling and rising of many among the Gentiles, as well as among the Jews.

4. Ever since the days of the Apostles, the character of Christ displayed in the gospel, has tried the hearts of the whole Christian world. Though many nations and kingdoms have been gospelized, yet only a few individuals have sincerely embraced the Saviour. Myriads and myriads of mankind, in the course of near two thousand years, have been invited to believe in Christ, but yet have despised him, and practically judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. The hearts of all these have been tried, and proved to be totally corrupt, by exhibiting Christ crucified before their eyes. How many have risen by looking *to* Christ? and how many have fallen, by looking *from* him? But none have believed nor disbelieved, and none have risen nor fallen, differently from what God intended, by the exhibition of Christ through the gospel.

5. It appears from the very character of Christ, that he cannot be exhibited to the minds of men, with-

out trying their hearts. His character, above all others, is adapted to draw forth the feelings of the human heart. It is not only supremely excellent, but infinitely interesting to all intelligent beings, and especially to mankind. None of the human race can view it with indifference. The child that was born in Bethlehem, that was consecrated to God in the temple, that came to manhood in Nazareth, that preached in Judea, that died without the gates of Jerusalem, that arose from the dead, and ascended up to heaven; that very same person was the mighty God, the Prince of peace, the Lord of glory, the Governour of the universe, and the supreme Judge of all intelligent and accountable creatures. Every human heart must be *for*, or *against* this great and illustrious Personage. Wherever he is exhibited in all his excellencies, offices, and designs, he must necessarily try the hearts of men in some very important respects.

And, first, in regard to God. In Christ dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Though united with humanity, he necessarily possesses and displays all the perfections of his Father. This justified him in saying to his disciples, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." Wherever Christ is exhibited, he reveals the character and counsels of God. "The Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared him." God, therefore, by exhibiting Christ in the gospel, tries the hearts of men in respect to himself. He certainly made it appear, that the Jews were his enemies, by the instrumentality of Christ. They had long professed to be the friends of God, and to desire the coming of the promised Messiah; but when he came and displayed his Father's character, they fully mani-

fested the enmity of their hearts towards both him and his Father. When he preached at Nazareth, and taught the sovereignty of God in the dispensation of his favours, they were extremely exasperated And whenever he brought the divine character into view, whether in his public or private discourses, it never failed to excite their bitter reproach and resentment. Hence he plainly told them, "If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. And because I tell you the truth ye believe me not. He that is of God, heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil." Upon their saying this, our Saviour turned to his apostles, and forewarned them of the treatment which they should receive from those, to whom they should preach the gospel of God. "But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin: He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." If God had never set up his son as a sign to be spoken against and opposed, it never would have appeared, in fact, that all men have, by nature, a *mortal* enmity against God, and would, if possible, actually destroy his existence. But by the crucifixion of the holy child Jesus, who was the Lord of glory, men's mortal

enmity to God has been clearly revealed, and will continue to be revealed, wherever the gospel is preached and the character of Christ is exhibited. His character will always display the character of God, and, of consequence, draw forth the native malignity of mankind towards the supreme Sovereign of the universe.

In the second place, the exhibition of Christ necessarily discovers the secrets of men's hearts towards themselves, as well as towards God. Christ in the course of his life, and more especially at his death, laid open the guilt and ill desert of sinners. He told them in plain terms, that they were serpents, and a generation of vipers, who deserved the damnation of hell; and he confirmed these declarations, by his sufferings and death on the cross. Before he appeared on earth, the false prophets and blind guides had daubed with untempered mortar, and led sinners to entertain a high opinion of the purity of their hearts. But he exposed their inward turpitude, selfishness, and hypocrisy; which, in words, they denied and resented, but, in conduct clearly expressed. The life of Christ condemned the lives of sinners, the preaching of Christ condemned the hearts of sinners, and the death of Christ demonstrated, that they deserved the wrath of God both in this life and in that which is to come. And the gospel, which contains the history of the character, conduct, and sufferings of Christ for this rebellious world, is a mirror in which all may discover their moral depravity and just desert of eternal destruction. God means, by exhibiting Christ through the gospel, to undeceive men with respect to themselves, and make them sensible of their guilty and wretched condition.

Besides, thirdly, the exhibition of Christ as a mediator, discovers men's feelings in regard to the terms of salvation. God has made love to the

person and character of Christ an indispensable condition of granting pardon to sinners. He declares, wherever he sends the gospel, that "whosoever believeth shall be saved; but whosoever believeth not shall be damned." And he says, "if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maran-atha." By thus exhibiting Christ as the sole foundation of forgiveness, he tries the hearts of sinners respecting their willingness to be saved. They naturally imagine, that they are very willing to accept of salvation; but when the true character of Christ is displayed, and love to his character is proposed as the term of divine acceptance, then the secrets of their hearts are disclosed, and they find that they would rather die eternally, than submit to that condition. Our Lord told sinners in his day, that they would not come unto him, that they might have life. And he illustrated this, by several striking parables; especially by the parable of the marriage feast, in which he represented those that were invited, as refusing to attend; and by the parable of the vineyard, in which he represented the husbandmen, as defrauding the owner, abusing his servants, and slaying his Son. The same spirit of opposition to the terms of the gospel still reigns in the hearts of sinners. So that God still tries, and will continue to try their hearts, by exhibiting Christ as the way, the truth, and the life, and the only name given under heaven through which they can find favour in his sight.

The next thing proposed is,

II. To show that God tries the hearts of men through the medium of Christ, in order to fix their future and final state. "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many." God intends to make men happy or miserable forever, according to the feelings of their hearts towards the Son of his

love. This Christ expressly and abundantly taught in the course of his ministry. He said, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Indeed, the whole New Testament represents God as determining to fix the eternal condition of all men under the gospel, according to their receiving or rejecting the Saviour whom he has provided. And we find this important truth confirmed by many plain and solemn facts. God fixed the final state of the inhabitants of Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida, according to their internal feelings and external conduct towards Christ. They finally fell, by opposing and rejecting his holy child Jesus. God fixed the final state of the Jewish nation according to their treatment of Christ. It was for their violent opposition to Jesus of Nazareth, and their avowed unbelief, that he cut them off, and cast them out of his vineyard. Christ was verily set for the fall of the Jews, and the rising of the Gentiles. And God is now exhibiting Christ before men, in order to fix their eternal state. He means to save, or destroy them, accordingly as they receive, or reject him who died for them. Their views and feelings respecting Christ in time, are to determine what shall be their views and feelings to all eternity.

And there appears to be a propriety in God's treating men according to their love, or hatred of Christ, because their feelings towards Christ afford a proper criterion of their true characters. If they love Christ, they love God; but if they hate Christ, they hate God. If they love Christ, they love the good of the universe; but if they hate Christ, they are enemies to all good. The character of Christ is the most infallible test of all

human characters. And by fixing the final state of all who enjoy the gospel, according to their love, or hatred of Christ, God will justify his conduct before the eyes of all intelligent beings. Saints and angels will approve of his finally rejecting those, who hated Christ without a cause; and the finally miserable themselves will be constrained to approve of his saving those, who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. Since it is God's design in exhibiting Christ before men, to try their hearts and prepare them for their final state, it becomes the ministers of the gospel to make Christ the main subject of their preaching. His character, in all its branches, runs through the whole of divine revelation, and comprises the essence of the gospel. It is impossible to preach the gospel, in all its weight and importance, without bringing Christ into view, as the only name given under heaven among men, whereby they can be saved. This was the constant practice of the Apostles, who were able and faithful ministers of the New Testament. They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ on every occasion. Yea, they determined to know nothing among their hearers, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Accordingly we find, that their preaching had a most powerful effect. By preaching Christ, Peter converted three thousand souls at one time. By preaching Christ, Stephen cut his hearers to the heart. And by preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, Paul approved himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and converted myriads among both Jews and Gentiles. If ministers mean to be faithful to God and to the souls of men, they must follow the example of the apostles. and make Christ the primary subject of their preach-

ing. This will make their discourses reach the hearts and consciences of their hearers, and cause the most stubborn sinners to tremble, and cry out, in anxiety and distress, What must we do to be saved? And this will make them become unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish.

2. If it be God's design in exhibiting Christ before men, to try their hearts and prepare them for their final state; then it is much to be desired, that the gospel should be preached to all nations. There is no ground to hope, that any of the Heathens will be saved, while they remain totally ignorant of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. It does not appear from the past dispensations of grace, that God ever sends his Spirit where he does not send his gospel. Though the apostle declares, "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him;" yet he demands, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" The whole tenor of scripture plainly intimates, that all, who are living in Pagan darkness, are strangers to the covenants of promise, and without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world. It is, therefore, as much to be desired, that these guilty and miserable creatures should have the gospel preached to them, as that they should escape the wrath to come, and secure the salvation of their souls. If the character of Christ were exhibited to them, they would have an opportunity of exercising that faith, without which it is impossible to please God, and obtain eternal life. For faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Though God intends to give unto his Son the heathen for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for

his possession; yet there is no ground to expect this desirable event, until the way is prepared by the universal spread of the gospel. If christians did but duly realize, that it is only in Christ, that God means to reconcile the world to himself, they would be more zealously engaged to send the gospel of his grace into all the dark corners of the earth. Were there to be a general diffusion of gospel light through the heathen world, there is abundant reason to hope, that God would make the knowledge of Christ a savour of life unto life to those who are perishing for the lack of vision. It becomes all the friends of Zion to pray, that God would make known his way upon earth, and his saving health among all nations. For he has assured them, that their prayers and exertions are necessary to bring about this great and glorious event.

3. If God means to try the hearts of men and prepare them for their final state, through the medium of the gospel; then he has an important purpose to answer, by sending it where he knows it will be rejected. Though he clearly foresaw and predicted, that the inhabitants of Judea would generally shut their eyes, and stop their ears, and harden their hearts, under the preaching of the gospel; yet he commanded the apostles to begin their ministry at Jerusalem, and make the first offer of salvation to the Jews. And when the gospel had tried their hearts and produced the effect foretold, Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should *first* be spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." God meant to give his degenerate people a fair opportunity to see and hate both him and his Son, and in that way to ripen themselves for their final ruin. And he now puts the same price into the

hands of those, who, he knows, will have no heart to improve it. The gospel is no less adapted to fit men for eternal misery, than for eternal happiness. This alarming truth the apostle Paul frequently exhibited in the most plain and striking light; and appealed to the consciences of men, whether God may not make the gospel a medium of destruction to some, as well as a medium of salvation to others. "What if God, willing to shew his wrath and make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" And again he asks, "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." It seems to have given him great encouragement to preach the gospel, to be assured, that it should be the mean of preparing both saints and sinners for their final state: "Now thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other; the savour of life unto life." The word of God never returns to him void, but always accomplishes his purpose of saving or destroying those, to whom he sends it.

4. If the exhibition of Christ be designed to form men for their future and eternal state; then they are in a very solemn situation, while they are hearing the gospel. It is quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword. It will infallibly penetrate and try their hearts, and leave impressions there, which never can be eradicated. Though they may come to

the house God for mere amusement, and hear the gospel with as much levity and indifference, as if they knew it were a cunningly devised fable, which could have no influence upon their future state; yet they will sooner or later feel the evil effects of their criminal stupidity and presumption. God told Ezekiel, that his vain and contemptuous hearers should reap the bitter fruits of their sin and folly, in despising his solemn messages. "Lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not. And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come) *then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.*" And Christ forewarned his unbelieving hearers, that his word would not be lost upon them, but prove the ground of their final condemnation. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." Whenever sinners come within the walls of the sanctuary they are under a moral necessity of embracing the gospel, or of rejecting the counsel of God against themselves, which is the most critical and interesting situation they can possibly be in, this side of eternity.

5. If the gospel tries the hearts and forms the characters of those who hear it; then sinners may easily and insensibly fit themselves for destruction. Many seem to think, that the gospel will do them no harm unless they openly and violently oppose it. They flatter themselves, if they never say any thing against it, by way of complaint or contempt; but, on the other hand, treat it with respect, acknowledge it to be divine, and hear it with decency, they are in the fair way to salvation. They verily believe, that the Jews were

highly criminal for their violent opposition to Christ, and the doctrines he taught; and they view all open infidels and scoffers as walking in the same broad road to destruction. But they mean to shun such shocking examples, and pursue a more wise and prudent course as long as they live. They intend to sit and hear the gospel with as much patience as possible, and never suffer their hard thoughts and inward enmity to break out into open violence to Christ, or to those who preach in his name. And so long as they constantly and seriously hear the gospel, they fondly hope it will prove a saving benefit to them. But this is a gross and dangerous delusion. Internal opposition to Christ is as fatal to the soul as external; and will as infallibly destroy it. How many serious, and apparently well disposed persons, sit under the gospel from sabbath to sabbath, with secret opposition to Christ, and to the way of salvation through his mediation and atonement? They see no form nor comeliness in him, wherefore they should desire him; but heartily hate his person, his doctrines, and his terms of mercy, which is a silent and insensible way to destruction. So long as sinners thus sit under gospel preaching, and hear and hate, hear and hate, hear and hate, they are constantly preparing, whether they realize it or not, to unite in the feelings, and share in the torments, of the incorrigible enemies of God, who shall lie down in everlasting sorrow.

6. We learn from what has been said in this discourse, that all who hear the gospel may know, before they leave the world, what will be their future and final state. God has given them a glorious and infallible sign. He has clearly exhibited the great and amiable character of the divine Redeemer, and told them, if they look at it and love it, they shall live; but if they

look at it and hate it, they shall die? They have only to determine how they have felt or do feel in the view of the Saviour, and draw the inference justly in order to know with certainty, whether they are friends or enemies to God, and prepared to enjoy his favour, or feel his displeasure forever. If they love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, they may assure themselves, that because he lives, they shall live: but if they remain conscious of hating the Lord Jesus Christ, they may assure themselves, that because he lives, they must die. His character will be forever exhibited to the view of all intelligent creatures, and those who view it with complacency and delight, must be perfectly blessed; but those who view it with directly opposite feelings, must be completely and forever miserable.

SERMON VI.

GOD LOVES THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.

PROVERBS viii, 17.

I love them that love me.

THIS is the language of divine wisdom, speaking throughout this chapter. It is not, however, very easy to determine whether divine wisdom is here to be taken in a figurative, or literal sense. Some suppose, that Solomon uses the term wisdom here, and in other parts of this Book, to denote true religion; or that wisdom, which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. Some suppose, that the wisdom speaking in the text, is Jesus Christ, who is called the wisdom of God. But some are more inclined to think, that wisdom is here personified and denotes God himself, who is often represented by one of his essential attributes, as the Almighty, Holy one, &c. These several expositions of wisdom very nearly coincide, so that we cannot deviate from truth, by adopting either of them, though we may not exactly hit the precise meaning of the sacred writer. But I choose to consider God as speaking in the text, and saying, "I love them that love me." The plain and obvious import of this declaration is,

That God loves none but such as first love him.

To illustrate this subject, I shall,

I. Show what kind of love God exercises towards them who love him.

II. Consider what is implied in men's loving God.

III. Inquire why God loves only such as first love him.

I. I am to show what kind of love God bears towards them who love him.

There is the love of benevolence, and the love of complacence. These two kinds of love are of the same nature, but distinguished by the objects upon which they terminate. The love of benevolence terminates upon percipient being, and extends to all sensitive natures, whether rational or irrational, whether they have a good, or bad, or no moral character. God desires and regards the good of all his creatures, from the highest angel to the lowest insect. His benevolence is bounded by nothing but an incapacity to enjoy happiness and suffer pain. He is good to the evil and to the unthankful; yea, he is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. Every creature has a share in his benevolent affections and his benevolent exertions, in exact proportion to his worth and importance in the scale of being. He so loved the whole wicked world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. His love of benevolence extends to sinners, as well as to saints, to the worst, as well as to the best of mankind. But his love of complacence is wholly confined to moral beings, who are possessed of moral excellence. Nothing but virtue, or goodness, or real holiness is the object of his complacence. He loves holiness in himself, and wherever he finds it in any of his creatures. He sees it in all those who love him, and therefore he loves *them*, not only with benevolence, but with complacence. When he says in the text, "I love them that love me," he means to declare, that he feels that complacency towards those who love him, which he

does not feel towards those who hate him. He loves those, who hate him, with the love of benevolence, but not with the love of complacence. It is, therefore, the peculiar love of complacence, which God bears to them, and to them only, that love him.

II. Let us consider what is implied in men's loving God.

1. This implies some true knowledge of his moral character. There is reason to fear, that many who live under the light of the gospel, and believe the existence of God, yet have no just conceptions of his nature and moral attributes. Though they have some right apprehensions of his self-existence, independence, almighty power, and all his natural perfections; yet they are ready to imagine, that he is altogether such an one as themselves, in his views and feelings. But this is a great and dangerous mistake. God is love. He formed all his purposes from eternity, under the influence of pure, disinterested benevolence, and is immutably determined to govern all events, and to dispose of all his creatures, so as to promote the highest holiness and happiness of them that love him. It is impossible to exercise true love to God, without some just conceptions of his perfect benevolence, which comprizes all his holiness, justice, mercy, and every other moral excellence. It is true, men may form and love a false character of God; but in that case, it is not the true God they love, but an object infinitely different. It is so far from being virtuous to love a false character of God, that it is highly criminal. Multitudes loved Christ, when he was here upon earth, while they were ignorant of his true character; but he never approved of their love; nay, he absolutely condemned it, as selfish and sinful. If men love a false character of God, their love is as re-

ally criminal as their hatred. The reason is, such love and hatred proceed from precisely the same source; that is, selfishness. The love of the Israelites at the Red sea, was as really criminal as their murmurs and complaints in the wilderness. They loved God at first, because they thought he loved them; and afterwards they murmured and complained, because they thought he did not love them, but intended to destroy them. Hence it appears, that there can be no true love to God, but what is founded on the true knowledge of God, and exercised towards his true character. But though true love to God implies a true knowledge of his character, yet a true knowledge of his character does not imply a true love to him; because men may hate his true, as well as his false character. Christ says to the Jews, "Ye have both *seen* and *hated* both me and my Father." This leads me to observe,

2. That true love to God implies esteem, as well as knowledge. True love cannot exist without esteem. One person may, indeed, love another without esteem; but that love can have no virtue in it. Esteem always arises from a conviction of moral excellence in the person or being esteemed. All men have a moral discernment of moral objects. Sinners are capable of discerning moral excellence in holiness; and when they discern it, they are constrained in spite of their hearts, to esteem it. Job was a perfect and upright man, and accordingly we are told, that the eye that saw him, and the ear that heard him, blessed him; that is, he commanded the universal esteem of both saints and sinners. So, when men have a true knowledge of God, they are constrained to esteem him, as the greatest and best of beings. Sinners cannot contemplate the infinite greatness and goodness of

God, without discerning his infinite worthiness to be loved. Such a sense of his infinite worthiness is necessarily implied in loving him supremely; for supreme love must be founded on supreme esteem. Moses loved God supremely, and his supreme affection was founded upon his supreme esteem of the divine character. This he expresses in his song of praise, upon the overthrow of Pharaoh. "Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders!" Men must have that esteem of God, which arises from a sensible conviction of his supreme worthiness, before they can love him with a sincere and supreme affection. But since they may have a true knowledge and high esteem of God, without loving him sincerely, it is necessary to add,

3. That their loving God truly, implies a supreme complacency in his moral character. True love to God essentially consists in being *pleased*, that he is what he is. In the exercise of true love to any object, there is a *pleasure* taken in the object itself. Men may have a true knowledge of the divine character, and a real esteem of it, while they see nothing in it, which gives them *pleasure*, but perfect pain. This pain is owing to their hatred of that divine excellence, which they feel they ought to love. But when they truly love God, they take *pleasure* in every part of his moral character. They love his holiness, justice, and sovereignty, as well as his goodness, mercy, and grace. David's love to God was a complacency in his moral beauty and excellence. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the *beauty* of the Lord." Jeremiah expressed the same satisfaction in God,

when he said, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul." The supreme moral excellence of the divine character is the primary object of the love of complacency. The mere natural perfections of the Deity, aside from his moral, cannot be the object of complacential love; but the reverse, the object of terror and aversion. It is the pure benevolence of God, which spreads a moral beauty over all his natural perfections, and renders them pleasing and lovely to every pious heart. Men's loving God with all the heart, with all the mind, and with all the strength, always implies a complacency in his moral character, without regard to any personal interest in his favour. It is not a mercenary, or selfish affection, but pure and disinterested. It is feeling towards God, just as he feels towards them that love him. It is giving him the supreme affection of the heart, from a clear knowledge and full conviction of his infinite moral excellence and glory.

We are now to inquire,

III. Why God loves only such as first love him. He says, "I love them that love me," which plainly supposes, that he has not the same affection towards those of an opposite character. It appears from the whole current of scripture, that God takes no complacency in unrenewed sinners, who are entirely destitute of true love to his moral perfections. The apostle says, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Our Saviour declares, "He that believeth not is condemned already, and the *wrath* of God abideth upon him." We read, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." And God himself expresses his feelings towards his enemies, in the most

pointed language, in the thirty second of Deuteronomy. "If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." The Bible is full of threatenings against sinners, which clearly express divine displeasure, and not divine love. It is true, God feels and expresses benevolence towards all mankind; but this is consistent with the highest displeasure against those that hate him. Nor will his displeasure cease, until they cease to be his enemies, and become his friends. But here some may be ready to ask, Why does he not love them, before they first love him?

The direct answer to this question is, that before they first love him, they are not lovely. Their hearts are full of evil, and entirely opposed to all that is good. They are wholly under the dominion of selfishness, which is total enmity to all holiness. In them, that is, in their hearts, there dwelleth no good thing. They have not one moral quality, which is truly virtuous and amiable. The corruption of their hearts defiles all their natural powers and faculties, and renders them really odious and detestable. Hence says the apostle, "Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." As there is nothing amiable in the natural perfections of God, aside from his holiness; so there is nothing amiable in the intellectual powers of men, aside from their benevolent and holy affections. While they have not the love of God in them, all their natural faculties are governed and corrupted, by an evil heart of unbelief. Hence it is morally impossible for God to love them, before they love him. As he clearly sees their corrupt hearts, he cannot but abhor their moral deformity. He is of purer eyes

than to behold sin with complacency. He must cease to be perfectly holy, before he can exercise the love of complacency towards those, who heartily oppose his own infinite purity and moral excellence. There is nothing that men can say or do, before they love God, which can render them lovely in his sight. But there is something in God, which renders him lovely and glorious, before he loves sinners; and therefore they can love him, before he loves them. There is a previous ground and reason for their loving him first; but there is no such previous ground and reason for his loving them first. The love of complacency towards sinners would be criminal; therefore it is as morally impossible for God to love them, before they love him, as it is for God to deny himself. But the love of complacency towards God is truly virtuous and holy; and as soon as sinners exercise this love, they become lovely, and must appear so in the sight of God. Were it possible in the nature of things, God would exercise complacency, as well as benevolence, towards sinners first. This appears from his exercising benevolence towards them, before they exercise benevolence towards him. He is infinitely good, and ready to do all that goodness can do for them; but perfect goodness forbids him to exercise the love of complacency towards them, while they remain dead in trespasses and sins.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God does not love sinners before they first love him; then it is a point of more importance in preaching the gospel, to make them sensible, that he hates them, than that he loves them. It is true, that he loves them with the love of benevolence; but at the same time it is equally true, that he does not love them with the love of complacence. He loves them, just as he

loves the fallen angels and the spirits in prison, and no otherwise. But sinners are extremely apt to believe, that since God loves them with the love of benevolence, and treats them kindly, he must also love them with the love of complacence. In this case, therefore, the most important point to be illustrated and inculcated is, that God hates sinners with perfect hatred, notwithstanding all his benevolence towards them. But here many, and I had almost said, the greater part of ministers insinuate, to sinners, that God loves them, while they have not the least spark of love to him. And some really advance this doctrine in plain terms, and assert that they cannot love God first. This is contrary to the whole tenor of scripture, and calculated to lead sinners into a fatal delusion; and there is reason to fear, that many have been finally ruined by it. It is, therefore, the great business of ministers, to teach sinners how vile and hateful they appear in the eyes of a holy and sin-hating God. Our benevolent Saviour, who came to suffer and die for sinners, never gave the least intimation, that God loved them with the love of complacence; but, on the other hand, addressed them as objects worthy of universal detestation and abhorrence. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John the baptist preached to sinners in the same manner. "When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" This mode of preaching is directly suited to convince sinners of their guilty and deplorable condition, and to prepare them cordially to embrace the

gospel. There is nothing so alarming to stupid sinners as to be told, that the great God is their enemy, that his wrath abides upon them, and will abide upon them, until they first love him. Accordingly the first and best preachers of the gospel, made it their main object to impress this awful truth upon the minds of sinners. The apostle Paul says, in the name of the rest, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." It is not the love, but wrath of God, that is best adapted to persuade sinners to flee from the wrath to come.

2. If God does not love sinners before they love him; then their first exercise of love to him must be before they *know* that he loves them. Many seem to think, that sinners must have some evidence, that God loves them, before they can put forth any exercises of love to him. But how is it possible, that they should get any evidence that he loves them, before they love him? He does not love them, until they have first loved him. Their love to him must go before, and be the evidence of his love to them; for the only evidence they can have, that he loves them, is a consciousness of their first loving him. His being worthy of their love does not depend upon his loving them; but their being worthy of his love depends upon their loving him. They may love him first, because he is really worthy to be loved, on account of his intrinsic excellence and glory; but he cannot love them first, because they are totally destitute of every holy and amiable quality. Whenever they begin to love God, they must necessarily know, that he does not and cannot love them as they then are. It is certain, even to a demonstration, that when renewed sinners first turn their eyes to God, their hearts rise in supreme affection to him, before they do or can know that he loves them. His

supreme excellence is the primary and sole ground of their supreme love to him, and not any supposed interest in his favour. For they are not in reality the objects of his complacency, and have no special interest in his pardoning mercy, until they have actually given him the supreme affection of their hearts.

3. If God does not love sinners before they love him; then they must love him, while they know that he *hates* them, and is disposed to punish them forever. He is a sin-hating, sin-condemning, and sin-punishing God, and all sinners, under genuine convictions, always view him in this light; yea, they realize that his wrath abides upon them, and that nothing but his abused patience prevents the immediate execution of his justice. It is in this situation, and while they view God as looking upon them as perfectly odious and hell-deserving creatures, that they first love him for his own intrinsic excellence, while they are totally ignorant whether he will save or destroy them. This is always the case, when convinced sinners are converted. Their conversion consists in a reconciliation to a holy, sovereign, sin revenging God. They love him for hating just such creatures as they are, and being disposed to give them a just recompense of reward for all their groundless enmity and opposition to him and his cause. The penitent malefactor, who was crucified with Christ, first loved God, and became reconciled to his vindictive justice towards himself, while he expected nothing but to sink down to hell, in a very few moments. "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed *justly;* for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this

man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." This instance of a sound conversion demonstrates, that every sinner, in order to be saved, must love a holy, sin-hating, and sin-revenging God, while he has no evidence of any interest in his special favour; but even while he looks up to him as ready to cast him off forever. The awakened and convinced sinner hates God for his holiness, his justice, and his sovereignty; but before he can become an object of the divine complacency, he must love God for these very same perfections, which for aught he knows, may be displayed in his everlasting destruction. And in the exercise of this true love to God, he must go to him for pardoning mercy, as the servants of Ben-hadad advised him to go to Ahab in his distress. "And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: *peradventure he will save thy life.*" When the sinner first loves God for what he is in himself, and asks for mercy, he cannot possibly know whether God will grant or deny his request; but without knowing this, he is willing that God should do his pleasure, and glorify himself by him, either as a vessel of mercy, or a vessel of wrath.

4. If sinners must love God before he loves them, then they are naturally as unwilling to embrace the gospel, as to obey the law. Many, who hate the law, which requires true love to God and man, pretend to like the gospel, which they imagine speaks a milder language. But this can be owing to nothing but a misapprehension of the true spirit of the gospel, which

requires precisely the same pure and disinterested love, that the law requires. Both the law and the gospel require sinners to love a holy, just, sin-hating. and sin-condemning God, and that upon pain of eternal destruction. The gospel is not a mere declaration of pardoning mercy to sinners, without any condition to be performed on their part. The condition of the gospel is that faith in Christ, which immediately flows from love to God the Father, who insists upon sinners returning to him, and submitting to his absolute sovereignty, before they know whether he intends to save or destroy them. And can there be any thing more disagreeable to their carnal hearts, in either the precept or penalty of the law, than such unreserved submission? The same selfish heart which hates the law, equally hates the gospel, when rightly understood. Christ did not come to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil. He did not come to save sinners in their native enmity and opposition to God; but to pardon them upon condition of their renouncing their groundless disaffection, and becoming cordially reconciled to his whole law and his whole character. It is impossible for sinners to approve of the gospel before they approve of the law, or to love the gospel before they love the law. It is a dangerous deception for any to think, that they love and embrace the gospel, while they inwardly hate and complain of the rigor of the law, either in its precept or penalty. None but those who delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man, really love the gospel, and stand entitled to the blessings of it.

5. If God loves those who first love him; then he is willing to receive them into his favour upon the most gracious and condescending terms. This is the plain import of all his free and universal offers of mer-

cy in his word. "Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." Can we conceive, that God could offer to pardon and save sinners, upon lower or easier terms than these? They are the very same terms, upon which a kind and indulgent parent would offer to forgive and receive a child, who had disobeyed his commands, abused his favours, and left his house and family. So our Saviour more than intimates in the parable of the penitent publican, and in that of the returning prodigal. As soon as the publican cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner," he went away pardoned and accepted; and as soon as the prodigal said in his heart, "I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants;" his father met him, embraced him, and forgave him all his faults. The father loved the prodigal as soon as the prodigal loved him; so God loves sinners, as soon as they love him. The father returned to the prodigal, as soon as the prodigal returned to him; so God will return to sinners, as soon as they return to him. This is loving, pardoning, and accepting sinners, upon the most gracious and condescending terms possible. It is impossible to conceive, that God should be willing to save sinners, or that they should be willing to be saved, before they first love him, and become cordially reconciled to his ami-

able and glorious character. His offers of mercy to sinners, are as low, as easy, and as condescending, as infinite grace can propose.

6. If God does not love sinners before they love him; then they have no right to desire or pray, that he would become reconciled to them, while they continue to hate and oppose him. Though they always cast off fear and restrain prayer as long as they can; yet when they are awakened to realize their guilty and perishing state, they never fail to call upon God to become reconciled to them while their hearts rise in sensible opposition to him. But what right have they to pray in such an unholy and unreasonable manner? Who hath required this at their hands? Though God has required them to ask for his love and mercy; yet he has never required them to ask amiss. Nay, he has expressly told them, that if they turn away their ear from hearing the law, even their prayer will be an abomination in his sight. And the reason of this is plain. They pray that he would become reconciled to them, while they are unreconciled to him, and that he would love them, while they are perfectly unholy and unlovely. God is of purer eyes than to behold sin. It is morally impossible, that he should love it in any of his creatures. What right, then, can unholy, unlovely, and impenitent sinners have to pray, that God would love them with complacency, while they are devoid of every amiably quality, and in the exercise of perfect malevolence? They have no more right to do this, than they have to pray, that God would change his nature, and become as unholy and sinful as themselves.

7. If God loves sinners as soon as they love him; then if they properly seek him, they shall certainly find him. This God expressly promises to all sincere

seekers. "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." If sinners will only follow these directions in seeking God, they not only *may* be, but *must* be saved. The benevolence of God disposes him, and the promise of God obliges him, to love those that love him, and to make them forever happy. This is the only proper way of seeking God, and the only certain way of finding him. And it is impossible to point out any other way of seeking God, which is either proper or safe. There is no propriety nor safety in directing sinners to seek God in an unholy and impenitent manner; for if they follow this direction, they will certainly be lost. But if they will renounce their own righteousness, become reconciled to God, and penitently ask for mercy, he will hear their prayers, and grant them all the blessings which he has promised to them that love him.

Finally, if God loves those who love him, then it is not so difficult as some imagine, for them to detemine whether they are personally the objects of the divine favour and stand entitled to eternal life. They have no occasion of prying into the secret counsels of God, in order to determine this most serious and important point. They have only to look into their own hearts, and see whether they themselves love God. If they are conscious of loving him sincerely and supremely, they have the witness within themselves, that he loves them, and will be their friend and portion forever, be-

cause he has expressly said, "I love them that love me." Though we cannot know that our fellow men love us, merely by knowing that we love them; yet we can know that God loves us, merely by being conscious that we love him. If we love God as a Father, we may know that he loves us as Children. Hence says the apostle to christians, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The spirit itself (that is, the spirit of adoption) beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Let every one, therefore, who entertains any doubt, whether God be his friend, examine his own heart, and see whether he is the friend of God. If he finds in his heart a sincere and supreme affection to God, he may be assured, that God loves him as a child, will treat him as a child: and make him an heir of eternal life.

SERMON VII.

CHRIST WILL REJECT MERCENARY FOLLOWERS.

JOHN vi, 26.

Jesus answered them, and said, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

THESE words refer to Christ's feeding the five thousand, with only five barley loaves, and two small fishes. This miracle convinced the multitude, that he was the Messiah whom they had long expected to come, and deliver them from their national calamities. Under this impression, they formed a secret design to take him by force, and make him king. But he perceived their thoughts, and defeated their purpose, by departing into a mountain alone. When the evening came on, the disciples also left the multitude, and attempted to cross the sea of Tiberias, which, by means of a mighty wind, threatened to overwhelm them. But in the midst of their distress, they saw Jesus walking on the sea, and approaching the ship, which greatly surprised them at first; but as soon as he made himself known, they invited him on board, and were instantaneously conveyed to land. The next day, the multitude whom he had miraculously fed, crossed the same sea in order to find him, and when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they were surprised, and said, "Rabbi, when camest thou hither?" Christ took no notice of this appearance of respect, but pointedly reproved them for their mercenary motives in following him. "Verily, verily, I say unto you,

Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." These persons had no love to the character of Christ, but only to his benefits. He said, "they loved him for the *loaves*," by which he meant not merely the bread they had eaten, but all the favours, which they had received, and which they expected to receive, from his beneficent hand. He saw the selfishness of all their friendly affections, and, for that reason alone, refused to acknowledge them as his sincere followers. The plain language of this instance of his conduct is,

That he will reject sinners, while they love him merely for his favours.

Here two things are to be illustrated.

I. That sinners may love Christ merely for his favours.

II. That he will reject them, while they love him from no higher motives.

I. Let us consider, that sinners may love Christ merely for his favours. Though they are entirely destitute of grace, and see no beauty or comeliness in the character of the Redeemer, yet they may love him for seeking and promoting their own personal good.

1. This appears from their conduct towards the Saviour, in the days of his humanity. They manifested a great regard to him, while he went about doing good, and dispensing his favours with peculiar liberality and compassion. They loved him for his miracles, for his public discourses, and for all the blessings which they expected he would bestow upon the nation in general. No man, perhaps, was ever more admired and beloved by the Jews, for a time, than Jesus of Nazareth. It is said in the history of his life, "The common people heard him gladly." It is said, "All

the people came early in the morning to him in the temple for to hear him." It is said, "He taught daily in the temple. And all the people were attentive to him." It is said, "Then drew near all the publicans and sinners for to hear him." It is said, "There followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan." These were really great multitudes, for they consisted sometimes of three, or four, or five thousand people. The followers of Christ were so numerous, that it was extremely difficult to approach him. At one time Zaccheus, and at another time his mother and brethren, could not make their way to him by reason of the press. And all these multitudes followed him with peculiar ardour and zeal. "It came to pass, that the people *pressed upon him* to hear the word of God, as he stood by the lake of Gennessaret." This fond attachment to Christ continued and increased until his last entrance into Jerusalem, just before his crucifixion. Then their affections for their long-expected and long-desired Messiah kindled into a flame of enthusiasm, and brake forth into songs of joy and exultation. "A great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way, and the multitudes that went before and that followed after, cried, saying, Hosannah to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosannah in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, this is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." Such were the views and feelings of sinners in Zion in regard to the divine Redeemer. They loved, admired, and praised

him for his favours. They felt and acted just as all other sinners would in a similar situation. For,

2. It is altogether agreeable to their selfish hearts, to love their benefactors. Our Lord laid it down as a universal truth, that "sinners love those who love them." It is their nature, "to be lovers of their own selves, and to seek their own things." Hence, they as spontaneously love Christ for his benefits, as they love their own interest. They wish to be happy as long as they exist. And so far as they view Christ disposed to promote either their temporal or eternal happiness, their selfish feelings are pleased and gratified. While he actually lived among them, some loved him for giving them food, some for giving them health, hearing, and sight, and some for giving them hopes of happiness in a future state. In these days, sinners as naturally love him for his death, for his gospel, for his gracious invitations, and for every thing he has said and done and suffered, which they imagine bears a favourable aspect upon their spiritual and eternal interests. They are indeed no less disposed to love Christ for his favours, than to love themselves supremely. But,

II. Christ will reject them, so long as they love him from no higher motives. It was his uniform practice to frown upon those, who professed to love him, or proposed to follow him, from selfish views. We find several other instances besides that in the text, of his rejecting such as he knew were attached to him by mercenary motives. When one came and said, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," he gave him this forbidding reply: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Another accosted him with equal zeal and presumption: "I will follow

thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house." This Christ considered as an expression of a selfish heart; for which he excluded him from his service. He said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." And when the amiable young ruler came to him and discovered his totally selfish heart, he sent him away sorrowful. His conduct in all these instances was exactly correspondent to his plain and repeated declarations upon this subject. He declared, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it. Whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Yea, he solemnly declared, that he would as final Judge at the last day, condemn even those, who had done ever so many acts of kindness to their fellow men, without a supreme and ultimate regard to himself. Both his preaching and conduct put it beyond a doubt, that he will finally reject all, who never love nor serve him, from any higher motives than his favours.

But here some may be ready to ask, Why will the gracious and compassionate Saviour exclude from his favour and kingdom all such as love him from no other than selfish considerations? The reasons are plain, and sufficient to carry conviction to every conscience;

1. It is because those who love him merely for his favours, are mortal enemies to his person. He knew Judas was his enemy and would betray him, notwithstanding all his apparent expressions of love. And he saw the same disposition in others, who loved and followed him for his favours. The evangelist tells us, "When Christ was at Jerusalem at the passover in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." It is related in the context, that Christ delivered a discourse, which offended his mercenary disciples, and it is said, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." In the eighth chapter of this evangelist we read, "As Jesus was speaking certain words, many believed on him." But after he had more fully explained himself, we are told, "Then took they up stones to cast at him, but Jesus hid himself." When he was preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth, the people "admired the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." But as soon as they perceived, that he had no partial affection for them in particular, they were filled with wrath, and attempted with violence to destroy his life. Thus some who loved Christ merely for his favours, discovered their real disaffection to his true character on particular occasions. But finally they all threw off the mask, and exhibited their mortal enmity in the most open and astonishing manner. The same multitudes, who conducted him into Jerusalem with acclamations of joy and triumph, in a few days after, cried with equal zeal and ardour, Crucify him, crucify him! and at last, stood around his cross, exulting in his dying agonies.

These facts demonstrate, that those who love Christ from merely selfish motives, are his mortal enemies. They perfectly hate all his human and divine excellencies, and would destroy him, if it were in the power of their feeble hands. This Christ knows, and for this he may justly exclude them from his blissful presence and consign them to a state of everlasting alienation and despair!

2. Those who love Christ merely for his favours, are real enemies to all his sincere friends, who bear his image and imbibe his spirit. This is a necessary consequence of their hatred to Christ, which he forewarned his true disciples to expect. "If we were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." The spirit here predicted, was acted out as soon as the christian church was formed in Jerusalem. The same men, who followed Christ for the loaves, who hated his doctrines, and who procured his death on the cross, afterwards embrued their hands in the blood of James and Stephen, and opposed all the true followers of the crucified Saviour. The same spirit still exists in its full strength in all who love Christ merely for his favours. They are heartily opposed to those, who feel and act agreeably to his precepts and example. And though their present love to Christ for his supposed love to them, restrains their enmity to his friends; yet nothing is wanting but a proper view of their real condition, to draw forth the native malignity of their hearts. And since Christ knows they are real enemies to both himself and to those who love him in sincerity, he may righteously separate them from the society of

the blessed, and appoint them their portion with the great accuser of the brethren.

3. Another reason why Christ should finally reject such as love him merely for his favours is, because they are enemies to his whole work of redemption. He came into the world to save his people from their sins, and bring them into a perfectly holy and happy state. And in executing his gracious design, he will bring all the elect to a cordial reconciliation to God, to himself, to one another, and to all holy beings in the universe. But those who love him merely for his favours, can have no portion or lot in this matter. They love themselves solely and supremely, and can never enjoy the holiness and happiness of others. The whole scheme of redemption and all the steps taken to accomplish it, will cross their views, wound their feelings, and destroy all their mercenary love to Christ, and to every other holy being. If such persons were admitted to enter the gates of heaven, they would feel a perfect contrariety of heart to all its objects, employments, and enjoyments. There the law of love will be completely fulfilled. There purely disinterested affections will be universally and mutually displayed. And there the most sensible opposition to selfishness and all selfish creatures will be fully, freely, and perpetually manifested. So that the last act of Christ in completing the work of redemption, must be to fix all his real friends in those mansions he has prepared for them and to banish all his and their enemies from his and their presence forever.

It now remains to improve the subject, which is adapted to throw light upon pure experimental religion.

1. If Christ condemns all those religious affections, which flow from a selfish heart; then there appears

to be one essential error prevailing in the christian world. The number is large, among various denominations of christians, who maintain that none can or ought to love Christ, until they know or believe that he loves them in particular, and intends to give them eternal life. They say in support of this sentiment, that the apostle tells us, "we love him because he hath first loved us." They suppose faith is before love, repentance, or any other gracious exercise. To this purpose they apply another text, which says, "faith works by love." That is, according to their construction, produces love. They hold, that the first and great duty of a sinner is, to make himself believe, "without any evidence from scripture, sense, or reason," that Christ has died for him in particular, has pardoned his sins, and will finally conduct him to heaven. And this appropriating faith, they imagine, will produce true love, repentance, submission, joy, hope, and all the christian graces. Thus their whole scheme of experimental religion is built upon the supposition, that we ought to love Christ merely for his favours, and not for the intrinsic beauty and excellence of his moral and mediatorial character. This sentiment universally prevails among Antinomians. In some form or other, many Calvinists really believe it. Arminians equally deny disinterested benevolence, and suppose men never do nor can act from any higher principle than self love. And every scheme of Universalism is evidently founded in selfishness. But this and all other selfish schemes of religion are, according to the whole tenor of Christ's preaching, fundamentally false and fatal. He abundantly taught, that no part of his religion consists in selfishness, and that no love to him, which flows from that corrupt source, will ever meet his approbation. And the reason is plain to the mean-

est capacity. Selfishness is the essence of total depravity, and constitutes the carnal mind, which is enmity to God, to Christ, to his friends, and to all true holiness. It is, therefore, an essential and fatal error, to maintain and believe, that we cannot and ought not to love God nor Christ, until we are persuaded we have a saving interest in their love. Those who build their hopes of salvation upon this sandy foundation, will be fatally disappointed, unless they seasonably renounce their error, become reconciled to the true character of God, and esteem Christ, not merely for his favours, but for what he is in himself, as the chief among ten thousands and altogether lovely.

2. If Christ will reject all those who love him merely for his favours; then there is great danger of men's deceiving themselves in regard to their spiritual state. They are naturally disposed to think more highly of themselves, than they ought to think, and to mistake the ground of their religious affections. If they love Christ merely for his favours, they are apt to conclude they love him sincerely, and shall meet his approbation at the last day. This is a fatal mistake which thousands have made. The multitudes, who loved Christ for the loaves, and followed him with joyful hopes, thus mistook the motives of their love, and imagined their selfish feelings were holy affections. The Israelites made the same mistake, who sang God's praise, but soon forgot his works. In times of the out-pouring of the Spirit and a general revival of religion, it is often the case, that the awakened and convinced, by some means or other, obtain a hope of pardon and acceptance, which fills their selfish hearts with raptures of joy. Some hope they are forgiven, because a text of scripture comes suddenly and unexpectedly into their mind; some, because they happen to open to

a certain passage in the Bible; some, because they imagine they hear a voice assuring them of their good estate; some, because they dream of seeing Christ in all his glory, and as manifesting peculiar love to them; some, because they hear the wonderful love of God and Christ towards sinners pathetically described; and some, because they apply to themselves the gracious promises made to true believers. In these and various other ways, men may deceive themselves with a false hope of a saving interest in Christ. The devil and a wicked heart concur to lead them into this fatal delusion, which is greatly strengthened and confirmed by those, who maintain and teach, that they ought to love Christ merely for his favours, and cannot love him from any higher motives. Surrounded by such powerful temptations from within and without, to mistake selfish love to Christ for true love, there is awful danger of multitudes falling into this soul-ruining deception. Yea, there is reason to fear, that thousands and thousands of the professed followers of Christ, who appear zealous in his cause, are mistaking their selfish love and zeal for true religion, and deceiving themselves with raised hopes and expectations of entering into the kingdom of glory, which will be finally and awfully blasted!

3. Since Christ has so fully condemned all religious affections, which flow from selfish motives, there is no necessity of men's deceiving themselves in regard to their spiritual state. The distinction, which he has made between false religion and true, is plain and intelligible to all, who are willing to know their own hearts. All men know what it is to love or hate from selfish considerations, and are able to distinguish between loving Christ for his favours, and loving him for his true character or divine beauty and excellence.

Those who loved him here on earth for his favours, knew the motives of their love. Some knew they loved him merely for affording them food. Some knew they loved him merely for restoring their sight. Some knew they loved him merely for enabling them to hear and speak. Some knew they loved him merely for raising them from sickness, weakness, and lameness, to health, strength, and activity. And some knew they loved him merely for coming, as they supposed, to save their nation from the calamities, which they had long endured from the power and oppression of their enemies. These were all selfish motives for loving Christ, which those who felt them and acted from them, might have certainly known and distinguished from that pure disinterested love, which he so plainly taught and inculcated. It was entirely their own fault, if they mistook their selfish, mercenary love to Christ for a truly holy and pious affection. He gave them no occasion to deceive themselves upon this interesting point, but favoured them with abundant means of knowing their character and condition. The same is true of all who now enjoy the gospel which contains the marks he has given of true and false religion. Every man may know, if he loves Christ merely for his favours, that he has no true religion. And, on the other hand, every man may know, if he loves Christ for his divine excellence and glory, that he is a real christian. No man under the light of the gospel can entertain a false hope of salvation, unless he chooses to deceive himself. Of this there is great danger, but no necessity. Men are however, extremely apt to hold themselves in doubt, and to plead in excuse, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" This is a perversion of the words of the Prophet, who does not mean to say,

that men cannot know their own hearts, but only the hearts of others. There is an essential difference between selfishness, in every form and degree of it, and that disinterested charity which seeketh not her own, and is the bond of perfection. This difference every man is capable of distinguishing, by only attending to the real motives of his love or hatred towards God, or towards Christ, or towards himself and fellow creatures. Peter knew how to distinguish his true love from every false affection towards his divine Master. When he forsook and denied him, he knew he felt and acted wrong; but when he repented and returned to him, he knew his love was pure and disinterested. This enabled him to answer promptly the trying question which Christ put to him. "Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" He replied, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." He would not say, as he once did too presumptuously, that he loved Christ more than the other disciples; but he would say what he knew to be true, that he loved him sincerely. If any who are the true friends of Christ are ignorant of their true character and happy state, it is because they deceive themselves. And if any imagine they are real christians, whilst they are under the entire dominion of a selfish heart, it is because they choose to live in quiet under a fatal delusion. Let all hearken to the solemn exhortation of the apostle upon this deeply and universally interesting subject. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your ownselves, how that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates."

4. If sinners love Christ merely for his favours, then nothing can induce them to love him for any thing else. No motives of temporal or spiritual good have the least tendency to alter the nature of their love, but only

to increase it. This was clearly manifested by their conduct towards Christ whilst he dwelt amongst them. When he fed them, or healed them, or relieved them from any natural evil, they loved him for doing them good, but not for his own divine excellence and glory. And when he offered them all the blessings of his kingdom, if they would give up their own interests for his and the gospel's, they would not accept the gracious proposal. He assured the rich young man, if he would sell all that he had, and come and follow him, he should have *treasure in heaven;* but he rejectted the offer, and went away sorrowful. He promised sinners in general, if they would renounce their houses or lands, or friends, for his sake, they should have an hundred fold more good in the present time, and in the world to come eternal life. But these great and alluring motives, which he exhibited before them, had no influence to change their hearts, or to induce them to love him and his cause supremely. Many preachers of the gospel seem to imagine, that the hard selfish hearts of sinners may be melted into true love and contrition, by displaying before them the beauties of holiness, the loveliness of Christ, and the joys of heaven; but though these motives may awaken their selfish love and gratitude and penitence, yet they will not excite a spark of holy love, or joy, or godly sorrow. There is nothing in God, nor Christ, nor heaven, that sinners will love more than themselves. They lie beyond the reach of all objective light, or external motives. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, without making any saving impressions upon their hearts. Though their love and joy may be raised ever so high by mercenary motives, still their hearts will remain totally selfish and impenitent. This is the very character which the prophet ascribes to the sinner. "Let

favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness.

5. If sinners love Christ merely for his favours, then it is easy to discover the only thing, which lies in the way of their salvation. They often complain of their inability to embrace the offers of mercy, and think it very hard to be required to accept the terms of life, upon pain of eternal destruction. They say they wish, they desire, and earnestly strive to enter into the kingdom of God, but find themselves unable. This is true. But why are they unable? what difficulty lies in their way of accepting the terms of salvation? Are they not as low and condescending as possible? Christ says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Again they are told, "all things are ready. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." What can hinder sinners from accepting these kind and gracious invitations? Can they not desire and love and choose other objects? Can they not even love Christ himself for his favours? What is the difficulty then? This subject clearly shows them what it is. It is nothing but their total selfishness. They love themselves supremely, which, as long as it continues, utterly prevents their loving Christ, or the gospel, or any other object, with a truly holy or benevolent affection. Self love can never rise above self; and so long as this love possesses the hearts of sinners, it is morally impossible for them to love Christ sincerely and come to him for a holy salvation. Hence Christ plainly tells them, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." While sinners love selfishness, they cannot love benev-

olence. While they love sin, they cannot love holiness. While they love Christ for his favours, they cannot love him for his truly holy and amiable character. But there is no difficulty in their turning about, and exercising benevolence instead of selfishness. They are altogether as capable of exercising supreme affection to Christ, as to themselves. Their impotency is moral, and lies wholly in their free, voluntary exercises. Upon this ground, God commands them to love him with all the heart, and to make them a new heart and new spirit. Upon this ground, he notonly commands but expostulates with them. "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die? Are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal?" And upon this ground, he threatens to destroy them. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but he have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: then shall ye call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. Therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." This sentence is so perfectly just, that when it is executed, evey impenitent sinner's mouth must be stopped, and every holy being must say, "Let him be anathema, maranatha." Let him perish forever.

SERMON VIII.

MEN HAVE NO RIGHT TO MISTAKE THE NATURE OF THEIR MORAL EXERCISES.

LUKE ix, 55.

But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

ALL men are naturally disposed to think, that their hearts are better than they are, and to mistake the nature of their moral exercises. To rectify this dangerous error, our Saviour took a great deal of pains, in his preaching and private discourses. In his sermon on the mount, he exposed the self-deception of the Scribes and Pharisees, who mistook their selfish feelings for true benevolence. Nor was he less plain and pointed upon this subject, in his more private discourses with his disciples. Whenever he perceived them to be blind to their own hearts and unacquainted with the real motives of their own conduct, he never failed to reprove them for their criminal ignorance. Many instances of this kind might be mentioned, but that to which our text refers is the most remarkable. "It came to pass when the time was come that Jesus should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem; and sent messengers before his face: and they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him. *And they did not receive him*, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know

not what manner of spirit ye are of." Though the disciples sometimes loved Christ with a pure, disinterested affection, yet they sometimes exercised a false and selfish affection towards him. In this case, it was their false love, which kindled into vengeance, and they resented the conduct of the Samaritans, because they thought it cast contempt upon them as well as upon their divine Master. They mistook, however, their love to themselves, for their love to their Redeemer, and really thought they felt and expressed a zeal for his honour, while they really felt and expressed a spirit of revenge for personal abuse. Notwithstanding they had been so long and intimately acquainted with Christ, yet they still entertained some wrong apprehensions of his true design in coming into the world. They flattered themselves, that he would restore the kingdom to Israel, and make them and their nation his peculiar favourites. They supposed what the Samaritans supposed, that he was partial to the Jews, and therefore they loved him for the same reason, for which the Samaritans hated him. Yet they were so unacquainted with their own hearts, that they mistook their *selfish* love for *holy* love to Christ, and their *selfish* hatred of the Samaritans, for *holy* hatred of sin. But Christ knew what was in their hearts better than they did themselves, and kindly reproved them for their criminal ignorance and self-deception. Hence we may justly conclude, that Christ meant to teach us this important truth,

That men have no right, in any case, to mistake their selfish feelings for benevolent affections. I shall,

I. Show that men are apt to do this in some cases: And,

II. Show that they have no right to do it, in any case.

I. I am to show, that men are apt, in some cases, to mistake their selfish feelings for benevolent affections.

Notwithstanding their strong propensity to mistake the nature of their moral exercises, they are often placed under such circumstances, and have such lively exercises of mind, that they cannot help knowing what manner of spirit they are of. Sinners sometimes have such clear views of divine objects and such sensible opposition towards them, that they know their hearts are not right with God. And sometimes saints have such lively exercises of grace, that they can clearly and certainly distinguish them from all selfish and sinful affections. But yet there are many cases, in which both saints and sinners are extremely apt to deceive themselves in respect to the nature of their moral exercises. And the question now before us is, when they do really mistake sin for holiness, and selfishness for true benevolence. And here it is plain,

1. That they often make this mistake, when their selfishness leads them to do the same things, which benevolence would lead them to do. Selfishness in a sinner will often make him act just like a saint; and selfishness in a saint will often make him act just as he would do under the influence of pure benevolence. There is no external action which can proceed from a good heart, but what may proceed from a heart totally destitute of goodness. Will benevolence lead men to observe the Sabbath, to read the Bible, to call upon God, to relieve the distressed, to speak the truth, and to pay an external obedience to the divine will? Selfishness, under certain circumstances, will lead men to do all these things, and to appear possessed of true benevolence. The Pharisees, who acted entirely from mercenary motives, performed the same external acts

of morality and religion, which they would have performed, had they been possessed of true love to God. This propriety and beauty of their external conduct led them to imagine, that they were really pious, and to mistake their selfish, for benevolent feelings. The young ruler, who came to Christ to know his duty, verily thought he had perfectly done it, because he had externally obeyed every divine command. Paul, while a Pharisee, formed the same false opinion of the nature of his moral exercises, and supposed he had lived a perfectly holy and blameless life, because he had done that from selfishness, which he ought and would have done, if he had been truly benevolent. Whenever selfishness leads men to put on the appearance of benevolence, they are extremely apt to think they are governed by a right spirit, and have those affections which are required in the law of love.

2. Men may mistake their selfish feelings for true benevolence, when they lead them to promote benevolent designs. Real benevolence is an active principle, which prompts men to do all the good in their power; and when their power fails, it leads them to form benevolent designs to promote the temporal and spiritual benefit of mankind. But selfishness, under certain circumstances, will carry men a great way in forming benevolent designs, and exerting themselves to promote the public good. We often see sinners unite with saints in promoting designs of great utility and importance, with apparently equal zeal and activity. And when selfishness operates in this manner, and leads men to promote the same useful and benevolent purposes, which true benevolence would lead them to promote, they are very apt to form a good opinion of themselves, and to mistake their selfish for benevolent feelings. Instead of judging of the nature of

their actions, by their motives, they judge of the nature of their motives by their actions; which is a very false and dangerous mode of judging. This seems to have been the error of Jehu, while warmly engaged in destroying idolatry, and promoting the purity of divine worship. He undoubtedly thought he was pursuing a benevolent design from benevolent motives, for he invited Jehonadab to come with him, and to see his zeal for the Lord. But there is great reason to fear, that he knew not what manner of spirit he was of, and mistook a zeal for his own glory, for a zeal of the glory of God. There are innumerable cases, in which selfishness will thus unite with benevolence; and in all such cases, men are extremely apt to mistake the motives of their conduct, and ascribe that to benevolence, which flows from selfishness.

3. When the same species of affections flow from selfishness, which would flow from benevolence, then there is room for men to mistake the nature of their moral exercises. It was for making such a mistake, that the disciples were reproved in the text. They had a selfish zeal for the honour of Christ, and a selfish indignation against those, who refused to give him a cordial reception. In such a case, they ought to have had zeal and indignation, and had they thus possessed true benevolence, it would have kindled into a holy zeal and indignation. When Christ saw the temple of God abused and profaned, he expressed a zeal for the honour of his Father, and an indignation against those, who made his house a den of thieves. His zeal and indignation flowed from pure benevolence; but the zeal and indignation of his disciples flowed from a selfish heart. Their selfishness led them to exercise the same species of affections, which they would and ought to have exercised, had they been truly benevo-

lent; and because their affections were of the right species, they thought they were of the right nature. When selfishness runs in a religious channel, and produces religious affections of the same species, with those which arise from a benevolent heart, they look so much like holiness, that men are extremely disposed to take them for real holiness, though they are in their nature diametrically opposite to it. There may be a selfish as well as a benevolent love; a selfish as well as a benevolent faith; a selfish as well as a benevolent zeal; a selfish as well as a benevolent joy; and all these selfish affections bear such a near resemblance to the same species of benevolent feelings, that both good and bad men very frequently imagine, that they are truly holy and virtuous exercises. There were multitudes, who followed Christ for the sake of the loaves or from selfish motives, that were full of love, and joy, and admiration, and ready on every occasion to cry, "Hosannah, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." But though these persons verily thought, that their affections for Christ were sincere and benevolent; yet when they saw others despise and reject him, and found that he opposed and condemned all selfish persons and selfish conduct, their mercenary love and joy turned into enmity, and prompted them to cry, "Crucify him, crucify him." Selfishness very often produces the same species of religious affections, that benevolence produces; and when this is the case, men are prone to deceive themselves, and verily believe, that they are under the influence of the divine Spirit, while they are actually indulging the most selfish feelings.

4. When selfish and holy affections follow each other in a thick succession, then men are apt to blend them together, and to view them all, as of the same pure

and benevolent nature. Thus, when good men rejoice in God, on account of some peculiar favours which he has bestowed upon them in particular, they at the same time, or as nearly at the same time as possible, rejoice in themselves; but yet they are ready to consider all their joyful and grateful affections as the fruit of true love to God. Their thoughts pass from God to themselves, from themselves to God, in such a rapid succession, that they hardly perceive that their affections change their objects, and of consequence do really change their nature. This is a very common case. Good men rarely have holy affections, without having some sinful ones creeping in among them. In almost all their love to God and man; and in all their religious duties and devotions, their good affections are mixed with some selfish feelings, which, in that connexion, appear to them as virtuous and pious. This seems to have been the case with the disciples, when Christ rebuked them for their self-deception. Their love to him was mixed with their love to themselves, so that they knew not what manner of spirit they were of. Selfish affections may be so intimately connected with benevolent ones, that they cannot be distinguished without the most critical and impartial attention to the exercises and operations of the heart. And since all men are naturally disposed to view all their moral exercises in the most favourable light, they are very prone, in such cases as these, to put sin for holiness, and selfishness for true benevolence

5. When holy and sinful affections are produced by the same means, men are apt to consider them all as of the same pure and benevolent nature. It seems to be a common opinion, that the effect must be of the same nature as the cause or means, by which it is produced. Men are generally disposed to look upon all their affec-

tions as good, which are excited by means that are good. When they are sensibly and seriously affected by reading the Bible, by religious conversation, by the preaching of the gospel, by the common influences of the Spirit, by publick calamities, or by personal afflictions and bereavements, they are very ready to consider their love, joy, sorrow, hope, fear, submission, or ardent desires, as right affections, merely because they arise from what are commonly called the means of grace, and are often productive of that effect. The Israelites at mount Sinai were deeply affected by what they saw and heard on that solemn occasion, and hence they supposed, that their religious awe, and fear, and reverence were truly holy affections; and this emboldened them to promise, that all the Lord their God had said they would do and be obedient; though they were really destitute of every holy exercise. Christ deeply impressed the minds of multitudes by his preaching and miracles, who mistook their selfish joy and admiration, excited by such means, for gracious affections. And men are no less disposed now, than they were in Christ's day, to believe that all their tender feelings, which are excited by solemn scenes, solemn objects, and solemn motives, are truly virtuous. They think, if they love, or fear, or submit, or rejoice, or hope, or resolve, while the means of grace are used with them, these exercises of the heart cannot be wrong, because they are produced by means which are good. And though Christ has told them, that a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, nor an evil heart bring forth gracious affections, yet they will believe, that their selfish feelings, under religious means, are the essence of true religion. It is often said, and still oftener thought, that the preaching of the gospel, the providence of God, and the common influence of the Spirit, cannot be the

means of producing selfish and sinful affections. It is true, indeed, such religious manurings and cultivations may produce gracious effects; but it is equally true, that they may produce the most selfish and criminal affections. Hence men have no just ground to conclude, that their religious views and feelings are of the right kind, merely because they can tell what text, or what sermon, or what affliction deeply impressed their minds, and turned their attention to God and divine objects. But there is reason to fear, that both saints and sinners do, in this and in many other cases, mistake their selfish feelings for benevolent affections.

And this leads me to show,

II. That men have no right to make this mistake in any case whatsoever. For,

1. There is a wide and essential difference between holy and unholy affections. Darkness is not more opposite to light, nor cold to heat, than selfishness is to true benevolence. The nature of the one is to promote private, and the nature of the other is, to promote public good. All selfish affections are interested, and terminate in the good of the person who feels them; but benevolent affections are disinterested, and seek a more noble and disinterested object. This contrariety between holy and unholy affections lays a foundation for every person, in all cases, to know what manner of spirit he is of. God has given all men a moral sense, which enables them to distinguish the nature of all their moral exercises, and to know whether they are of a selfish or benevolent kind. If they will only consult conscience and allow it to do its office, they may in all cases infallibly determine whether they are seeking a selfish or benevolent good. And they have no right to judge of the nature of any of their affections, without consulting conscience, nor to form an opinion in oppo-

sition to its infallible dictates. There is no affection of the heart but what may be brought before this tribunal, and have its nature and tendency clearly and justly ascertained. It must be owing to some blameable negligence, inattention, or partiality, therefore, if either saints or sinners, in any case, mistake the nature of their moral exercises, and imagine that their affections are holy when they are really sinful. As they are always capable of forming a true judgment of their own hearts, so they have no right, under any circumstances, to think them better, or worse than they are in reality.

2. God has given them all proper and necessary means to assist them in knowing their own hearts. He has laid down in his word a great variety of marks of true and false love, by which they may compare and judge of their moral exercises. He has plainly told them how selfishness and benevolence will operate and oppose each other. And he has set before them a great many striking examples of holy and unholy men, which illustrate the nature of holiness and unholiness, in the most plain and instructive manner. In the conduct of Abel and Cain, of Moses and Pharaoh, of Elijah and Ahab, of John and Judas, and of many more mentioned in Scripture, the opposite natures of holiness and sin, or benevolence and selfishness are visibly delineated. Indeed, it is next to impossible, that any should read the history which God has given of mankind, and not perceive the essential difference between right and wrong, holy and unholy affections. The Bible history is a glass, in which all men may clearly discover their own moral features, and easily determine what manner of persons they are. Under so many means of knowing himself, no man has a

right to think himself something when he is nothing, or to mistake his selfishnessfor benevolence.

3. God has expressly forbidden men to mistake the nature of their religious affections, and to deceive themselves in respect to their spiritual state. He says repeatedly, "Be not deceived." And again he says, "Let no man deceive himself." Christ demanded of sinners, "Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" And when his disciples mistook the nature of their zeal, he condemned them for their self-deception. "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." After God has given men the power and the means of distinguishing the essential difference between nature and grace, he may very justly forbid them to mistake their natural affections for gracious exercises. The divine prohibitions in regard to self-deception are as just and binding as any other prohibitions against any other moral evil; and men have no more right to deceive themselves concerning their own hearts, than they have to practise any other deception or hypocrisy. Besides,

4. They cannot mistake the nature of their moral exercises, unless they are under the influence of some selfish and sinful motive, which they have no right to comply with. True benevolence will naturally lead persons to judge righteous judgment respecting the nature of all their religious exercises and external conduct. It is only while men are under the reigning power of selfishness, that they desire to think too favourably of their own hearts, and mistake sinful for holy exercises. Were they to judge of their views and feelings, only while in the exercise of grace, they would judge impartially, and clearly distinguish their wrong from right exercises. It must, therefore, always be wrong for men to mistake their selfish feelings for

benevolent affections, because they can never make this dangerous mistake, unless they are under the blinding influence of that selfishness, which they have no right in any case to indulge.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If men may mistake their selfish feelings for benevolent affections; then they may likewise mistake their benevolent affections for selfish feelings. Though they are more liable to mistake nature for grace, than grace for nature; yet there are various ways in which they may run into this less common and less dangerous error. The best of christians are often too inattentive to the exercises of their own minds, by which they are liable to mistake their holy for unholy affections. They are so sensible of the corruption of their hearts, and so often discover wrong motives of conduct, that they are ready to suspect the nature of their good exercises, which are mixed with so many that they know to be evil. Or they may become so dull and stupid, and have so little grace, that they cannot discover it, without more than common attention, which they are indisposed to give. So that when they are awakened to realize their spiritual leanness and languishment, they are surprized, and ready to give up all their past hopes, and to sink down in deep despondency. This is the natural and painful consequence of their mistaking the few holy exercises they have for selfish feelings. And whenever they suffer themselves to depart from God and grow cold and formal in the duties of devotion, they may justly expect, that their sinful declension will be followed with darkness, doubts, and distressing fears.

There is another way in which gloomy christians may mistake the nature of their pious affections, and

that is, by being too much afraid of deceiving themselves. In their dark and gloomy frames, they have an awful apprehension of the danger of self-deception, which leads them to ponder on the dark side of things, and to search after all possible evidence against themselves, in order to know the very worst of their case. And while they are doing this, they either overlook, or reject all evidence in their favour, because they feel bound in duty to give up their hope. Hence, like David, they refuse to be comforted, by calling in question not only the sincerity of their present feelings, but also the sincerity of all their past exercises of love, faith, repentance, submission, joy, and peace, which they once thought were of the right kind, and which afforded them great satisfaction and enjoyment. Under such gloomy circumstances, many real, and some eminent christians, have mistaken grace for nature, and ascribed all their pious affections to selfish motives, which has given them a great deal of needless, and worse than needless anxiety and distress.

Besides these two, there is a third way in which some good men may mistake the nature of their religious exercise, and conclude that they have never experienced a saving change. It is, by comparing themselves with themselves, or with others whom they esteem better than themselves. Though they know by experience, that they have actually exercised love, faith, repentance, godly sorrow, humility, submission, and self-denial; yet they find that they have not been uniform, consistent, and persevering in these exercises, but have often had very different and contradictory views and feelings. And this want of uniformity and consistency in their religious exercises, they consider as a conclusive evidence of their insincerity and graceless state, though it is in reality only an evidence of that

imperfection in holiness, which the Scripture represents as common to all christians in this life. They may likewise run into the same error respecting their spiritual state, by comparing themselves with others, whom they view as eminently pious. When they hear such persons relate what light they have had in reading the Scriptures, what peace and comfort and freedom they have enjoyed in secret devotions, and how little they have been troubled with darkness, doubts, or fears, they are ready to conclude, that they themselves are strangers to true religion, because they have never experienced the same high and lively exercises of grace. But no real christians have a right, in this or any other way, to mistake their real character and condition. They ought to be very thankful for the least spark of saving grace.

2. If men are apt to mistake the nature of their moral exercises; then good men are very liable to think they have more grace, than they really possess. This was the case of the disciples, whom Christ rebuked for esteeming themselves better than they were in his impartial eye. They supposed they felt a pure and holy zeal for his honour, while they were indulging a false and selfish zeal for their own reputation. All good men are equally liable to the same species of self-deception. Their natural affections often run in the same channel, and towards the same objects, with their gracious exercises; and when this happens, they are apt to think, that they have more love, more faith, more self-denial, and more holy joy and gratitude, than they really feel or express. Their good exercises predominate, and give an amiable complexion to all the selfish feelings of their hearts. And though they might distinguish their wrong affections from their right ones; yet their self-love leads them to think more

highly of themselves, than they ought to think, which is the essence of spiritual pride. This is a secret sin, which most insensibly besets good men. How often did God reprove his ancient people for their high and unreasonable opinion of their goodness? How often did Christ rebuke the Scribes and Pharisees for their spiritual pride and self-conceit? Yea, how often did he rebuke his own disciples for the same sin? He reproved Peter for his pride and self-confidence. He reproved the sons of Zebedee for their ambitious views and claims. And he visited Paul with a thorn in the flesh, to make him think soberly and as he ought to think of himself. Were men perfectly good, they would never be proud of their goodness; but while they remain imperfect, they are as liable to overrate their goodness, as any other personal quality or excellence. There is reason to fear, that not only pious, but eminently pious men, do often entertain a too high opinion of their piety, by mistaking many of their selfish feelings for pure and disinterested benevolence. And if they would only scrutinize their religious exercises with impartiality, and compare them with the law of love and the spirit of Christ, they would find abundant reason to humble themselves, like Hezekiah, for the pride of their hearts.

3. If men are prone to mistake their selfish feelings for benevolent affections; then we may easily see why they so generally disbelieve the doctrine of total depravity, which is plainly taught in the word of God. None pretend to deny, that mankind are sinners, and very far from being so good as they ought to be. But few, however, are disposed to believe, that any of the human race are totally depraved, and entirely destitute of every right exercise of heart. Most men imagine, that the worst of sinners have some sparks of

goodness, and, in their sober intervals, form some good resolutions, and perform some good actions. They form this favourable opinion of human nature, from their own experience. They are conscious, that they were never so stupid, so hardened, or so wholly inclined to evil, as to have no desires, nor endeavours to feel and act right; but, on the other hand, they have often pitied the afflicted, relieved the distressed, and done a great many things on purpose to promote the good of their fellow creatures. A consciousness of such feelings and conduct, naturally leads them to conclude, that there is no such thing as total depravity in any human heart. But if selfishness may put on the appearance of benevolence, it is easy to discover the fallacy of this mode of reasoning. Those who argue in this manner, mistake selfish feelings for benevolent affections. And they will continue to make this mistake, until the divine law is set home upon their conscience. Paul had no apprehension of his total depravity, until the commandment came, and convinced him that there was no good thing in his heart. He thought he was blameless, while he was under the entire dominion of sin; and he thought so from his own experience. And it is very difficult to make any sinners think otherwise of themselves, until their conscience is awakened to distinguish nature from grace, or their selfish feelings from benevolent affections.

4. If men have no right to mistake the nature of any of their moral exercises; then real christians have no right to doubt of their good estate. They have gracious affections, which are diametrically opposite to selfish feelings; and those gracious affections would afford them a satisfying evidence of a saving change, if they would only distinguish them from their unholy exercises. Their holy affections are an infallible

evidence of their being born of God, and having passed from death unto life, notwithstanding any contrary feelings. Their remaining corruptions do, indeed, prove that they are imperfect in holiness, but do not prove that they are in a state of nature, and wholly destitute of grace. There is no man that liveth and sinneth not. The best of men in this world are more or less burdened with sin and guilt. The apostle Paul himself groaned under this burden. He said, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But notwithstanding this, he could say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." His unholy exercises were no counter evidence to his holy ones, and therefore were no just cause of doubting of his good estate. His consciousness of sincerely loving the divine law, was an infallible evidence of the renovation of his heart, and of his reconciliation to God and title to pardoning mercy. All true christians do as really love God and his holy law, as the apostle did, and they may be as conscious of their holy affections as he was, and of course may know, as he did, that they are in a state of grace and favour with God. It is upon this ground, that real christians are required to make their calling and election sure. This they all are capable of doing, and if they neglect to do it, they are guilty of refusing to be comforted, and of withholding from God that gratitude and praise, which his distinguishing grace demands. As they have experienced the grace of God in truth; so they ought to renounce their unreasonable doubts and fears, and to rejoice in a well grounded hope of eternal life.

Finally, this subject calls upon all to inquire what manner of spirit they are of. The great propensity of mankind to mistake the nature of their moral exercises,

and to judge too favourably of themselves, renders self-examination not only proper, but highly necessary. If Christ's first disciples had occasion to examine what spirit they were of, there is reason to think, that all other persons have much more occasion to look into their hearts, and inquire whether they have not been guilty of much self-deception, which is both criminal and dangerous. And if they would discover the truth upon this serious and interesting subject, let them answer some such questions as the following.

Have you an inquisitive spirit respecting the nature of your religious affections, and the true state of your minds? There are many who are very inquisitive about other things, but have no inclination to acquire self-knowledge. They think much and say much about others, who appear to be destitute of vital piety and even moral honesty, while they totally neglect to call themselves to an account, and examine their internal views and feelings. But it is characteristical of good men to make diligent search, and commune with their own hearts. Have you this habitual desire to search and try yourselves, by the infallible rules, which God has given you for this purpose? Or do you live in the total or habitual neglect of this salutary and necessary duty? A true answer to this query will tend to determine, whether you are in a state of nature or state of grace, and whether you are growing or declining christians.

Have you examined yourselves impartially? If you examine your hearts ever so frequently, without an impartial and sincere desire to know what they are, you may only increase your self-deception, and become more and more ignorant of your true state and character. It is to be feared, that many first entertain, and afterward support, their hope of being the subjects of

a saving change, by a partial and selfish opinion of their religious views and feelings. Their hope originated from a self-righteous spirit, and the same spirit governs them in their self-examination. They have never been willing to know the truth, and never will know it, unless they examine themselves with more impartiality. It concerns you, therefore, to inquire whether you have had a sincere desire to know your own hearts, and have examined them with a real willingness to discover the nature of your affections, and the true state of your souls.

Have you been so much acquainted with the natural deceitfulness of your hearts, as to find the need of critical and frequent self-examination? Many have such a good opinion of their own hearts, as never to call their goodness in question; which is an unhappy sign, that they have never known their native and total depravity. Real christians know, by painful experience, that their hearts, are by nature, deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. They have found the folly and danger of trusting in their good desires, intentions, and resolutions. They have known to their sorrow, that their hearts are like a deceitful bow, always bent to backsliding. This has led them to realize the necessity of watching and examining their hearts with great diligence and impartiality. Has your experience, then, of the deceitfulness of your hearts led you to the frequent and faithful performance of this duty?

Have you used all the proper means in your power to discover your spiritual state, and the nature of your religious experiences? Perhaps, you have been seriously affected by the word or providence of God. Perhaps, you have seen your exposedness to eternal destruction, and felt great anxiety to escape the wrath

to come. And perhaps, you have been convinced of your just desert of that everlasting punishment, which you feared. But, after all, have you become reconciled to the justice of God in your condemnation? Have you cordially embraced the offers of life, and taken God for your supreme portion? If you have not exercised such love and submission to God, and such dependence upon sovereign grace, your fears and convictions can afford you no just foundation to think, that you have passed from death unto life, and become the heirs of salvation. Now have you compared your views and feelings with the marks of grace in the word of God? Have you read the best books you could get upon experimental religion? Have you conversed freely with judicious christians of your acquaintance? And have you earnestly prayed, that God would search your hearts, and not suffer you to deceive yourselves in the great concerns of your souls?

Finally, have you ever come to a decision respecting your spiritual state? Many choose to live in doubt, rather than to come to a fair and satisfactory conclusion, whether they are, or are not the true friends of God. This is a dark mark. Real christians are willing to know the truth, whether it be in their favour or against them. They sincerely desire to know whether they are in the path that leads to heaven, or in that which leads to destruction. If they find evidence, that God has formed them vessels of mercy, they desire to give up themselves publickly to his service, and to walk worthy of their high and holy calling, and to lead others to glorify their heavenly Father. Have you then come to a decision, and found your path clear to do your whole duty?

SERMON IX.

THE NATURE OF REGENERATION.

GALATIANS v, 22.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love.

THOUGH christians generally believe, that men must be born of the Spirit in order to enter into the kingdom of God; yet they are not so well agreed in respect to the nature of this new birth. Some suppose, that the Spirit of God renews men, by merely reforming their external conduct. Some suppose, that he renews them, by merely implanting a new principle of holiness in their minds, without producing any holy exercises. And some suppose, that he renews them, by shedding abroad the love of God in their hearts, and making them actively holy. Now, this is the effect, and the only effect, which, the apostle tells us, the divine Spirit produces in the hearts of men, in regeneration "The fruit of the Spirit is *Love*." Love is the fulfilling of the law, the bond of perfectness, and the essence of all true holiness. As soon as the Spirit of God produces love or true benevolence in the hearts of sinners, he makes them holy as their Father who is in heaven is holy, and instamps upon them his moral image, of which they had been totally destitute before. The true meaning of the text may be properly expressed in this general observation:

That the Spirit of God, in regeneration, produces nothing but love.

I shall show,

I. That the Spirit of God, in regeneration, produces nothing but love.

II That he does produce love.

III. That the love which he produces, is the essence and source of all holy or gracious affections.

I. I am to show, that the Spirit of God, in regeneration, produces nothing but love.

He does, indeed, often strive with sinners, and sometimes very powerfully, without softening or subduing their hearts in the least degree. He strove a long time with that ungodly and incorrigible generation, who were finally swept away by the flood. He strove with the rebellious Israelites, who perished in the wilderness. He awakened and convinced many under John's and Christ's, and the Apostles' preaching, whom he never renewed or converted. And he commonly alarms the fears and awakens the consciences of those sinners whom he intends to renew, some time before he effectually changes their hearts. This he does, to prepare them for regeneration, in which he forms them vessels of mercy. The only question now before us is, whether, in the act of regeneration, he produces any thing besides love. And here we may safely say, that he does not produce any thing besides love, in regeneration, because there is no need of his producing any other effect, in that saving change. Sinners possess all the natural powers and faculties, which belong to human nature, and which are necessary to constitute them moral agents, before they are made the subjects of grace. They are capable of knowing God, of understanding the gospel, and of performing every duty, which is enjoined upon them, by divine authority. Our Saviour said of those, who had not the love of God in them, "they have both seen and hated both me and my Father." Those in the state of nature stand in no need of having any new power, or faculty, or principle of action, produced in them, in order to their becoming holy. They are just as capable of loving, as of hating God; and it is for this reason, that he requires them to love him, and

forbids them to hate him, in his law, which is holy, just, and good. Manasseh was as capable of doing good, as of doing evil, before he was renewed; and Paul was as capable of promoting, as of opposing the cause of Christ, before he was converted. This is true of all sinners, who are as much moral agents, and as proper subjects of moral government, before as after regeneration. Whenever, therefore, the divine Spirit renews, regenerates, or sanctifies them, he has no occasion of producing any thing in their minds, besides love. This, indeed, he has occasion to produce, because their carnal mind is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. In regard to the exercise of their minds, they need an essential change; but in regard to the powers and faculties of their minds, they need no change. All that the Spirit of God has to do, in regeneration, is to change the hearts of sinners from sin to holiness, or from hatred to love. And this, I now proceed to show,

II. Is the effect, which he actually does produce, in regeneration. "The fruit of the Spirit is love," says the apostle in the text. His words are very plain and emphatical. He does not say, that the fruit of the Spirit is a new taste, or relish, or disposition, or principle, but is love, and nothing which is previous to it, or the foundation of it. And this representation of regeneration is agreeable to many others, which we find in the New Testament, where this saving change is more clearly described, than it is in the Old Testament, though even there, the circumcision of the heart is represented as the production of love. Moses tells the people, that their hearts should be circumcised "to *love* the Lord their God." The description of the new birth, which Christ gave to Nicodemus, deserves peculiar attention. "Jesus said unto him, Verily, verily

I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He proceeds to say further, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And he immediately subjoins an explanation of this divine change. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." He here sets sin and holiness in contrast; for by flesh, he means sin; and by spirit, he means holiness. When the Spirit of God renews a sinner, he instamps his own moral image upon him, which consists in holiness; and we know that all holiness consists in love. The holiness of God consists in love, and therefore the holy Spirit must produce love in those whom he renews and makes holy. Hence says the apostle John, "Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God." And he expresses the same idea, when he says again, "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." But the apostle Paul is still more explicit upon this point, in the fifth of Romans, where he asserts, that he and other christians had a hope, which made them not ashamed, "because the *love* of God was shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost." The nature of regeneration clearly appears from the necessity of it. The only reason why regeneration is necessary, is because sinners are morally and totally depraved. And their total moral depravity altogether consists in selfishness. They are lovers of their own selves, and seek their own private, separate interest, in opposition to the interests of all other beings. This makes them enemies to God and to all righteousness, and disposes them to injure, and as far as they can, to destroy all, who appear to stand in the way of their selfish interests and designs. This total depravity renders them unfit for

the kingdom of God, and incapable of enjoying the blessings of it, and to remove this disqualification for heaven, they must be regenerated or born again. Regeneration, therefore, must consist in the production of love or true benevolence. There is no other conceivable way, in which the Spirit of God can remove their selfishness, but by producing benevolence, or shedding abroad the love of God in their hearts. This will slay their enmity, reconcile them to God, unite them to Christ, and fit them for heaven. And we now appeal to all who have been born again, whether they ever experienced any other change, in regeneration, than a change from selfishness to benevolence, from hatred to love, and from opposition to reconciliation to God. Scripture, reason, and experience, all concur to prove, that the Spirit of God, in regeneration, produces love, and nothing but love, in the hearts of those, whom he raises from spiritual death to spiritual life. It now remains to show,

III. That love, which the holy Spirit produces, in regeneration, is the essence and source of all holy or gracious affections. It is generally supposed, that regeneration lays the foundation of all the exercises of grace. But many maintain, that this cannot be true, unless the divine Spirit produces a principle of grace, which is prior to love, and every other gracious exercise. But this opinion does not appear to be well founded. The love which the Spirit of God produces, in regeneration, is the love of benevolence, and not the love of complacence. It is not, perhaps, possible, in the nature of things, that the love of benevolence should take place in the heart of any man, before the love of complacence; because he cannot see the divine beauty and excellence of benevolence, before he has felt it in his own breast. Hence benevolence will pro-

duce complacence, but complacence will not produce benevolence. But as soon as a man feels benevolence, in himself, he will love benevolence and every holy affection, in God, and in the friends of God. Do not many christians well remember; that when they were first regenerated, they, instantaneously, felt benevolently and friendly to all around them, whether friends or foes; and in consequence of that, immediately exercised peculiar love and complacency towards God, and towards all who appeared to bear his moral image? Such are the natural and genuine effects of that love of benevolence, which the Spirit of God produces, in regeneration. It is the foundation, essence, and source, of all holy or gracious affections. So the apostle plainly represents it, in the text and context. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love," that is, the love of benevolence. And the fruits or effects of this love of benevolence are, "joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." As the love of benevolence comprises all the moral perfections of the Deity, so the love of benevolence comprises all the virtuous and holy exercises which compose the christian character. Accordingly, when the divine Spirit produces the love of benevolence in the human heart, he lays a foundation for joy, peace, and every other holy affection. Benevolent love is the root, from which all holy feelings and conduct naturally spring. It produces every thing which the law requires, and which is necessary to perfect obedience. This will more fully appear, if we trace the catalogue of graces, which the apostle mentions, to the source from which they flow.

From holy love proceeds holy joy. This is a branch of true benevolence. When a sinner, who has been hating and opposing God, and murmuring and

complaining under a painful sense of his holy and irresistible sovereignty, has holy love shed abroad in his heart, his mind is naturally filled with joy. He rejoices in the being, perfections, and government of God. He sees the earth to be full of the goodness of the Lord, and wonders why he had never before rejoiced in the displays of his glory. He is ready to call upon all around him to praise the Lord, for all his astonishing goodness and grace to the children of men. Holy joy, is one of the first effects, which flow from that holy love, which is produced by the holy Spirit, in regeneration.

From holy love proceeds, not only holy joy, but holy peace. In the exercise of divine love, the renewed sinner enjoys that peace of God, which passeth all understanding. He finds peace as well as joy, in believing. He feels at peace with God, with the friends of God; and with all mankind. He enjoys that solid and permanent peace, which the world cannot give, and which the world cannot take away. I might now go on, and show how love will produce not only joy and peace, but faith, and goodness, and gentleness, and meekness, and long-suffering, and every other virtuous and amiable affection; but I will only further observe, that divine love will dispose men to pay universal obedience to the divine commands. It will dispose them, to call upon God in secret, in private, and in publick. It will dispose them, to remember the Sabbath day, and to keep it holy. It will dispose them, to seek the glory of God in whatever they do. It will dispose them, to avoid every appearance of evil, and steadily pursue the path of duty. It will, in a word, make them new creatures, and cause them to walk in newness of life. Hence says the apostle, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things

are passed away, and all things are become new." Thus it appears, that the holy Spirit, in regeneration, produces that pure, holy, disinterested love, which is the source of all holiness and obedience. Though there is no natural or necessary connexion between the first exercise of love, and all future exercises of grace; yet there is a constituted connexion, which renders future exercises of grace as certain, as if they flowed from a new nature, or holy principle, as many suppose. For those who maintain, that a new nature or principle of grace is given, in regeneration, still suppose, that the new nature or principle of grace is not always in exercise, and never produces any holy affections, without the special influence of the divine Spirit upon the heart. And if this were true, the certainty of a continuation of holy exercises, would be no greater, on the supposition of a new principle implanted in the mind, in regeneration, than on the supposition of the production of a new exercise of love. For love will no more flow from a principle of love, without a divine influence, than joy or peace, or any other gracious exercise, will flow from love, without a divine influence. So that upon any supposition whatever, the continuance of grace, after regeneration, must absolutely depend upon a continued operation of the Spirit of God upon the mind of every one who has been regenerated. And this being the case, the production of love, in regeneration, must lay as solid and permanent foundation for a holy life, as the implantation of a new principle, disposition, or moral taste, could possibly lay. When the holy Spirit produces love in the soul, in which there was nothing but selfishness before, he effects an essential change in the heart, and forms the subject of grace after the moral image of God, and prepares him for the kingdom of

heaven. And this is as great and as good a change as can be produced in the human heart.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the Spirit of God produces nothing but love in regeneration; then there is no ground for the distinction, which is often made between regeneration, conversion, and sanctification. They are, in nature and kind, precisely the same fruits of the Spirit. In regeneration, he produces holy exercises; in conversion, he produces holy exercises; and in sanctification, he produces holy exercises. Accordingly, the inspired writers use the terms regeneration, conversion, and sanctification, to denote the same holy and gracious affections. But systematick divines generally use them, to signify very different things. They use regeneration, to denote the Spirit's operation, in producing a new heart, or a new nature, or a new principle, which is prior to and the foundation of, all holy exercises. They use conversion, to signify the Spirit's operation, in producing love, repentance, and faith; which are implied in embracing the gospel. And they use sanctification, to signify the Spirit's operation in producing all future exercises of grace. But the Scripture makes no such distinction, between regeneration, conversion, and sanctification. The sacred writers use these terms indiscriminately, to denote not only the first, but the following effects, of the Spirit's operation upon the hearts of christians. They represent conversion and sanctification, as continued regeneration, and produced in the same manner, by a special, divine influence. Paul tells the Philippians, that he was confident, "that he who had begun a good work in them would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Upon this ground, he exhorts the same persons to work out their

salvation with fear and trembling. "For, says he, it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do his good pleasure." He expresses the same sentiment in his prayer for the Hebrews. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ." These passages perfectly accord with the language of the text and context. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." According to the whole tenor of Scripture, the Spirit of God produces all holy exercises in the hearts of saints. He first produces love, then repentance, then faith, and every other holy affection through life, until he has carried sanctification to perfection in the kingdom of glory. The terms regeneration, conversion, and sanctification, may be used, to denote the distinction of *Order* in the operations of the Spirit, but not to denote a distinction of Nature, or of Manner, in his gracious operations. He produces the same exercises of holiness, and in the same manner, in renewing, converting, and sanctifying the hearts of christians. So that there is not the least foundation in Scripture, reason, or experience, for the common distinction between regeneration, conversion, and sanctification.

2. If the Spirit of God in regeneration produces nothing but love; then men are no more passive in regeneration, than in conversion, or sanctification. Those who hold, that the divine Spirit, in regeneration, produces something prior to love, and the foundation of it; that is, a new nature, or new principle of holiness, maintain that men are passive in regenera-

tion, but active in conversion and sanctification. And if the Spirit of God produces something beside love, in regeneration, and implants a new principle of action in the soul, it must be allowed, that men are really passive in regeneration, and active only in conversion and sanctification. But if what has been said, in this discourse, be true, there is no new nature, or principle of action, produced in regeneration, but only love, which is actively itself. The first fruit of the Spirit is love, and nothing besides, before, or different from love; and it is universally allowed, that men are active in exercising love to God or man. Accordingly, the Scripture requires men to be active in regeneration, conversion, and sanctification; for it requires them to be regenerated, to be converted, and to be sanctified, without suggesting the idea of passivity in respect to either of these duties. This will clearly appear from the express commands of God. Hear his command in the tenth chapter of Deuteronomy. "Circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked." Hear his command in the fourth chapter of Jeremiah. "Thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, ye men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it." Hear his command in the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel. "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" In these commands, God requires men to be regenerated, upon pain of eternal death.

God commands men to be converted, as well as regenerated, or to become cordially reconciled to him.

By Isaiah he says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." By Ezekiel he says, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" By John the Baptist he says, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." By Christ he says, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel." By Peter he says, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." And Paul says, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God." These divine precepts expressly require men to be converted.

There are other commands of God, which as plainly and expressly require men to be sanctified, as to be regenerated and converted. Among many others, the following deserve particular attention. "Be ye holy; for I am holy." "Keep yourselves in the love of God." "Grace in grace." "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Let these three classes of commands be critically examined and compared, and every one must see, that God as plainly and expressly requires men to be regenerated, as to be converted or sanctified. And if this be true, it necessarily follows, that men are no more passive in regeneration, than in conversion or

sanctification. The truth is, men are regenerated, converted, and sanctified, by the special operation of the divine Spirit, and are always equally active under his gracious influence. For it is impossible, that he should produce love, or repentance, or faith, or any other gracious desire, affection, or volition, without their being active. The supposition that men are passive, under the regenerating, converting, or sanctifying influence of the Spirit of God, is not only unreasonable and unscriptural, but inconsistent with every command in the Bible.

3. If the holy Spirit, in regeneration, produces nothing but love, or holy exercises; then the regenerate are as dependent upon him for their future, as for their first, exercises of grace. Regeneration gives them no new principle, nor new power. They are no more able to act of themselves, or independently of a divine influence, than they were before they were renewed. The same divine influence is as necessary to produce the second, as the first exercise of love, the third, as the second exercise of love, and all future exercises of love, as the preceding ones. The preparation of their heart and the answer of their tongue, is continually from the Lord. He works in them both to will and to do in every duty. They are not sufficient of themselves to think any thing as of themselves; but their sufficiency is of God. David freely acknowledged before God his need of divine influence, in every act of obedience. "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." Jeremiah humbly said, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Solomon said to his son, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge

him, and he shall direct thy paths." Every true saint can sincerely adopt the language of David, in his addresses to God from day to day. "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." The more christians grow in grace, and become acquainted with their own hearts, the less confidence they have in themselves, and the more they realize their continual need of the sanctifying and quickening influences of the divine Spirit.

4. If the Spirit of God produces nothing but love in regeneration; then it is no more a supernatural work, on the part of God, than any other divine operation upon the minds of men. The Spirit of God has always produced holy love in the hearts of the angels of light; but who can suppose, that this is a supernatural or miraculous operation? The Spirit of God produced holy love in the hearts of our first parents before they apostatized; but who can suppose, that he operated supernaturally or miraculously upon their minds? There is nothing more supernatural or miraculous, in the divine Spirit's producing holy love in those, who have been once destitute of it, than in producing the same holy affection in those, who have never been sinful. In regenerating a sinner, the Spirit does not counteract any law of nature, nor produce any miraculous effect. He did operate supernaturally, when he gave to one the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge; to another the gifts of healing; to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues. All these were supernatural effects, produced in a supernatural manner. But the working in men both to will and to do what is right, is no supernatural effect,

and no other than what he has done for nearly six thousand years together. It is true, indeed, that regeneration, conversion, and sanctification are all produced by the *special* operations of the Spirit. They may be called *special*, because he renews, converts, and sanctifies some and not others; and because, in regeneration, conversion, and sanctification, he produces those gracious affections, which are not common to mankind. There is reason to believe, that the speaking of regeneration, conversion, or sanctification, as a supernatural work, has led many to draw a very false and dangerous consequence from it. How many have hence inferred, that sinners are under a natural inability to love God, repent of sin, believe the gospel, and obey, from the heart, any of the divine commands? It is difficult to see, why this inference is not just, if regeneration, conversion, or sanctification, is owing to a supernatural operation of the Spirit. For, who has a natural ability to work miracles? and who can be properly required to make him a new heart, repent of sin, believe the gospel, and obey every divine command, before he is the subject of the supernatural and miraculous influences of the divine Spirit, if these are necessary to enable him to put forth such holy exercises? Those who preach, that regeneration, conversion, and sanctification, are produced by the supernatural power of the Holy Ghost, put an excuse into the mouths of sinners, which it is extremely difficult and even impossible to take away. This ought to teach teachers to use a more proper and scriptural language, in treating upon this solemn subject.

5. If the Spirit of God produces nothing but love, in regeneration; then sinners have no more excuse for not beginning to love God, than saints have for not continuing to love God. They can no more contin-

ue to love God, without a divine influence, than sinners can begin to love God, without a divine influence. They are both equally and constantly dependent upon a divine influence, to do their duty. But who will say, that saints have any excuse, for not keeping themselves in the love of God, and being steadfast and unmoveable, in the performance of every duty, because God must work in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure? But if saints have no excuse, for the neglect of duty, then sinners have none. They cannot plead, that they are any more dependent upon divine influence, in order to love God, repent, believe the gospel, and obey the divine commands, than saints are. They need no other principle, power, or ability, to do all that God requires, than what they naturally possess. It is true, they need a divine influence, and so do saints. Nothing but their hating God prevents their loving him; and they are just as able to love him, as they are to hate him. They must be, therefore, as totally inexcusable and self-condemned, for not loving and serving God, as the best saints on earth are, for neglecting any duty. The divine commands lie upon them in their full force, to make them a new heart, to repent of sin, and to believe the gospel, without delay.

Finally, this subject teaches us, that the true, scriptural doctrine of regeneration, conversion, and sanctification, which all mean the same thing, is perfectly consistent with all the commands, which God has given to saints and to sinners. If regeneration does not consist in any new principle of action, but only in the production of holy and benevolent exercises; then God may consistently require saints to love him constantly and perfectly; and he may consistently require sinners to love him as constantly and per-

fectly as saints. He may, with propriety, give the same commands to both. Though love be of God, and the fruit of the Spirit; yet both saints and sinners are bound to love God with all the heart, with all the soul, with all the mind, and with all the strength; and this obligation will lie upon them in its full weight to all eternity. It is an obligation which is founded in the nature of things, and which cannot be dissolved, as long as God remains supremely amiable, and they remain capable of loving him with supreme affection.

SERMON. X.

IT IS THE DUTY OF SINNERS TO MAKE THEM A NEW HEART.

EZEKIEL xviii, 31.

And make you a new heart and a new spirit.

THE Jews were now under the correcting hand of God in Babylon; but instead of accepting the punishment of their iniquities and ascribing righteousness to their Maker, they bitterly complained of the severity and injustice of his conduct. They said, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." God knew they meant to insinuate, that he was punishing them, not for their own sins, but for the sins of their fathers, which he solemnly declares to be a false and absurd insinuation. "As I live, saith the Lord, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son, is mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son." But still they objected, "the way of the Lord is not equal." God now appealed from their reason to their conscience, and demanded, "O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God: Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, *and make you a new heart and a new spirit:* for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Here sinners are expressly required

to make them a new heart, as well as to repent and turn from all iniquity. The plain and important truth, therefore, which properly falls under our present consideration, is this:

It is the duty of sinners to make them a new heart.

I shall endeavour to show,

I. What a new heart is.

II. What it is to make a new heart.

III. That this is the duty of sinners.

The nature of this subject requires a careful and candid attention; especially the two first branches of it, upon which a clear understanding of the whole depends. For if we can ascertain what a new heart is, and what it is to make a new heart, the proof of the doctrine will be easy, and the whole discourse plain and intelligible to every capacity.

1. Let us consider what a new heart is.

Though a new heart be a Scripture phrase and in common use, yet different men attach very different ideas to it; and for this reason I shall proceed gradually in explaining it, and observe some things which it cannot mean.

There is no ground to suppose, that it means any new natural power or faculty of the soul, which is necessary to render sinners capable of understanding and doing their duty. They are as completely moral agents as saints, and as completely capable, in point of natural ability, of understanding and obeying the will of God. He knew that those whom he addressed in the text, and required to make them a new heart, were possessed of reason, conscience, and every other natural faculty of the mind, and upon this ground alone, made that solemn appeal to them in a preceding verse, "Are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?" Since God appeals to sinners as moral agents, we can-

not suppose, that the new heart, which he requires them to make, is any natural power or faculty of mind, which they do not need, and which, if they did need, they could be under no obligation to obtain.

Nor can a new heart mean any new natural appetite, instinct, or passion. Whatever belongs to our mere animal nature, belongs to sinners as well as to saints. And when sinners become saints, they experience no change in their natural appetites, or animal propensities; but a new heart commonly serves to weaken and restrain, instead of increasing or strengthening such sensibilities as are destitute of every moral quality.

Nor can a new heart mean any dormant, inactive principle in the mind, which is often supposed to be the foundation of all virtuous or holy exercises. Such a principle appears to be a mere creature of the imagination; but supposing it really exists, what valuable purpose can it serve? Can a dormant principle, which is destitute of all perception and sensibility, produce love, penitence, faith, hope, joy, and the whole train of christian graces? We may as easily conceive, that all holy affections should spring from that piece of flesh, which is literally called the heart; as to conceive, that they should spring from any principle devoid of activity. A new heart, therefore, cannot mean a new principle, taste, relish, or disposition, which is prior to, or the foundation of, all holy affections or gracious exercises.

This leads me to say positively, that a new heart consists in gracious exercises themselves; which are called new, because they never existed in the sinner, before he became a new creature, or turned from sin to holiness. This will appear to be a just and scriptural

explanation of a new heart, from various considerations.

In the first place, the new heart must be something which is morally good, and directly opposite to the old heart, which is morally evil. But there is nothing belonging to the mind, which is either morally good, or morally evil, which does not consist in free, voluntary exercises. Supposing there is a dormant principle in the soul, which lies at the bottom of all voluntary exercises, yet so long as it lies dormant and inactive, there can be no moral quality belonging to it. And, indeed, if it should really produce moral exercises, still all moral good or evil would lie in the exercises themselves, and not in the principle. There can be no moral good or moral evil in any thing belonging to the mind, which has no perception and activity. Accordingly, we never praise or blame any person for any property he possesses, or any motive he puts forth, or any thing in him or about him, in which he is totally inactive and involuntary. The new heart, therefore, which must be allowed to be morally good, must consist in free, holy, voluntary exercises, and not in any thing whatever, which is supposed to be prior to them, or the foundation of them.

This will further appear, if we consider, in the next place, that the divine law requires nothing but love, which is a free, voluntary exercise. The first and great commandment requires us to love God with all our heart; and the second commandment requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. God requires love, and nothing but love, in every precept or prohibition he has given us in his word. But we know, that love is a free, voluntary exercise, and not any taste, habit, or principle, which is totally inactive

and involuntary. It is absurd to suppose, that God should require any thing of us, in which we are altogether *passive*, because this would be to require us to *do nothing*. Hence the new heart required in the text, must consist in activity, or the free, voluntary exercise of true benevolence, which comprises every holy and virtuous affection.

And this, I would further observe, is agreeable to the experience of all who repent, and turn from their transgressions, and make them a new heart and a new spirit. The change which they experience is merely a moral change. They find no alteration in their intellectual powers or speculative knowledge, but only in their moral exercises. They are sensible, that old things are passed away, and all things become new in their affections. They exercise such love to God, such hatred of sin, such faith in Christ, and such delight in the duties of devotion, as they never exercised before. Thus it appears from the united evidence of reason, scripture, and experience, that a new heart consists in nothing but new, holy, voluntary exercises of the mind. If this be a just explanation of a new heart, it will be easy to see,

II. What it is to make a new heart.

If a new heart consisted in a new principle or natural faculty, it would be difficult to see how a sinner could make him a new heart, without exerting almighty power, or performing an act of creation, which is absolutely impossible. But if, as we have seen, a new heart wholly consists in new holy affections, then all the sinner has to do to make him a new heart, is to exercise benevolence instead of selfishness, or to put forth holy instead of unholy exercises. The precept in the text which requires sinners to make them a new heart, means no more nor less, than their turning from

sin to holiness, or exercising that pure and holy love which the divine law requires. To make a new heart in this sense, is agreeable to the common apprehension and the common language of mankind. It is very common for one person to say to another, *make yourself easy,* or *make yourself contented;* that is, alter your mind, change your heart, exercise totally different affections from what you have at present. And there are many other familiar expressions, which convey the same idea; such as these in particular, Be kind—Be careful—Be sober—Be honest—Be generous—Be friendly. Every person knows when he is addressed in this form, that he is required to exercise proper, instead of improper affections, or to exercise benevolence instead of selfishness. And since the divine commands run in the same form, they are to be understood in the same sense. When God says, Be sober—Be vigilant—Be humble—Be obedient—Be holy—Be perfect—he means that men should put forth truly pious and holy affections. And so far as these and other divine precepts respect sinners, they require the exercise of the same affections, only with this peculiar circumstance, that they are *new*, or such as they never exercised before. There is no command given to sinners more plain and intelligible, than the command to make them a new heart. It does not mean, that they should *create* any new powers or faculties, or lay any new foundation for holy exercises; but only that they should exercise love, faith, repentance, and all the gracious affections, to which the promise of pardon and salvation are made. As the new heart consists in nothing but new holy affections, so the making of a new heart consists in nothing but exercising such new holy affections. The way is now sufficiently prepared to show,

III. That it is the duty of sinners to make them a new heart.

1. The bare light of nature teaches that every person ought to exercise universal benevolence. This duty results from the nature of things. Every intelligent creature is capable of knowing the difference between moral good, and moral evil, and this knowledge lays him under moral obligation to exercise true benevolence towards all proper objects of it. God is supremely excellent, and sinners are capable of seeing his great and amiable character which they are bound to love supremely. All who know God are under indispensable obligations to glorify him as God. Sinners are as capable of knowing God as saints, and are under the same obligations to love him, notwithstanding the native depravity of their hearts. Their depravity wholly consists in selfish affections, which do not destroy either their capacity, or obligation to exercise holy and benevolent affections. Though sinners have hated God, rejected the gospel, and lived in the exercise of perfect selfishness, in time past; yet this is no reason why they should not immediately love God, embrace the gospel, and live in the exercise of true benevolence, in time to come. It is just as easy for them to put forth benevolent exercises, as if they never had a selfish one before; and their obligation to exercise benevolent affections is as great as if they never had been in the least degree selfish. The reason is, their obligation to exercise benevolence, arises from the nature of things, or their being free, moral agents. Though the Algerines are mere Pagans and destitute of the light of divine Revelation, yet they have no right to treat their prisoners of war with malevolence and cruelty. Neither their native depravity, nor their ignorance of the Bible, excuses them for their malevo-

lent and inhuman conduct towards those who fall into their hands. They ought to exercise benevolence instead of malevolence, or make them new hearts. The mere light of nature lays them under moral obligation, to put away their hard, cruel, malignant hearts, and become kind, tender, and benevolent towards all nations. And surely sinners under the gospel are no less obliged, by the nature of things, to put away all their selfish affections, and exercise universal benevolence, or immediately turn from sin to holiness. It is just as easy for a sinner to *begin* to love God, as to *continue* to love him after he has loved him once; and it is just as easy both to *begin* and to *continue* to love God, as to *continue* to hate him. And for the same reason that he ought not to *continue* to hate God, he ought *immediately* to love him; or to put away his *old heart* of *hatred*, and make him a *new heart* of love.

2. God, who perfectly knows the state and characters of sinners, repeatedly commands them to make them a new heart. He commands them to change their hearts both explicitly and implicitly, in various forms, and in a multitude of places. In the verse which contains our text, he says in plain terms, "Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a *new heart* and a *new spirit*." We find a similar command in the tenth of Deuteronomy. "Circumsise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked." This same command is repeated in nearly the same expressions in the fourth of Jeremiah. "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskin of your hearts. O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Nothing less than the making of a new heart is required in the fourth chapter of

James. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and *purify your hearts*, ye double minded." In these passages, God explicitly commands sinners to make them a new heart; and he implicitly requires the same thing, in every other command he has given them in his word. When he commands them to love himself with all their hearts, and their neighbours as themselves; or when he commands them to repent, to believe, to submit, to pray, to rejoice, or to do any thing else, he implicitly commands them to make them a new heart, or to exercise holy, instead of unholy affections. And for sinners to exercise holy affections, is to exercise the new affections, in which a new heart consists. Thus it appears, that sinners, notwithstanding their total depravity, are capable of making a new heart, and are commanded to make a new heart, and of consequence, that it is their first and indispensable duty, to make them a new heart. Every argument that can be adduced to prove, that they ought to do any duty, will equally prove that they ought to do this first duty of all.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the making of a new heart consists in the exercising of holy, instead of unholy affections, then sinners are not *passive*, but *active*, in regeneration. It has been the common opinion of Calvinists, that a new heart consists in a new taste, disposition, or principle, which is prior to and the foundation of all holy exercises. And this idea of a new heart has led them to suppose, that sinners are entirely passive in regeneration. But if a new heart consists in new holy exercises, then sinners may be as active in regeneration as conversion. Though it be true, that the divine agency is concerned in the renovation of the heart, yet this does by no means destroy the activity of sinners.

Their activity in all cases is owing to a divine operation upon their minds. In God they live, and move, and have their being. They are not sufficient of themselves, to think any thing as of themselves, but their sufficiency is of God. He always works in them both to will and to do, in all their free and voluntary exercises. When the inspired writers mention only the divine agency in regeneration, and represent men as "born of the Spirit, created anew in Christ Jesus, and raised from the dead by the mighty power of God," they do not mean to exclude the activity of the subjects of this saving change. They may act, while they are acted upon, in regeneration, as well as in sanctification. It is generally allowed, that sanctification is the work of God's Spirit, and at the same time supposed, that saints are *active* in the growth of grace, or perseverance in holiness. Indeed, it is expressly said, that God, who begins, carries on the good work in the hearts of believers. But if saints can act freely under a divine influence in sanctification, why cannot sinners act freely under a divine influence in regeneration? The cases are perfectly similar, and so represented in the word of truth. Sinners are required to make them a new heart, and saints are required to keep themselves in the love of God. But there could be no propriety in these commands to saints, nor to sinners, if they must be *passive*, in becoming and continuing holy. Every command given to either saints or sinners, requires them to be *active*, not *passive*, in obeying the command. And since God requires sinners to make them a new heart, as well as saints to grow in grace; it is just as certain, that sinners are *active* in regeneration, as that saints are *active* in sanctification; and it is just as certain, that both saints and sinners are *active* under the sanctifying and renewing

influence of the divine Spirit, as that the divine commands are holy, just, and good.

2. If sinners are free and voluntary in making them a new heart; then regeneration is not a miraculous or supernatural work. Were it even true, that on God's part, regeneration is the production of a new nature, disposition, or principle in the human mind; still it would not be a miraculous or supernatural operation, according to the common acceptation of the phrase. But since in regeneration God does not create any new nature, disposition, or principle of action, but only works in men holy and benevolent exercises, in which they are completely free and active, there is a plain absurdity in calling the renovation of the heart a miraculous or supernatural change. This is carrying the *passivity* of the creature in regeneration to an extravagant height, and so as to destroy all obligation of sinners to do the least duty, until a miracle has been wrought upon them. How this is consistent with that distinction between natural and moral inability, which has been so clearly stated and strongly supported, by a very acute and eminent Divine, I can by no means conceive. I believe, it was never said by them of old time, that regeneration is a miracle, though they did say it is the production of a new nature, disposition, or principle of action. And in saying this, they set the doctrine of regeneration in direct opposition to all the divine commands, invitations, and threatenings to sinners. It is certain, however, that sinners understand them in this light, and charge them with a palpable contradiction in their discourses upon passive regeneration, in which they exhort them to immediate repentance, faith, and new obedience. And, perhaps, it is beyond the power of man, to reconcile the *passivity* of sinners in regeneration with their immediate duty to repent, to believe, or to do any thing else, in a holy and

acceptable manner. But the doctrine of active regeneration is perfectly consistent with all the gospel requires, or promises, or threatens in respect to sinners, and approves itself to their reason and conscience in the sight of God. It is, therefore, a matter of serious importance, that the true doctrine respecting the new heart should be exhibited in a plain scriptural light, and so as to convince sinners, that there is nothing but their free, voluntary, selfish affections, which prevents their immediately embracing the gospel and securing the salvation of their souls.

3. If it be a duty, which God enjoins upon sinners, and which they are able to perform, to make them a new heart; then there is no more difficulty in preaching the gospel to sinners, than to saints. Those ministers, who hold to *passive* regeneration, and maintain that sinners neither can, nor ought to make them a new heart, always find great difficulties in applying their discourses to the unregenerate. They feel constrained, either to omit exhorting sinners to any duty, or to exhort them to wait for a new heart, or to exhort them to seek for a new heart, or to exhort them to make them a new heart. They feel a difficulty in exhorting them to make them a new heart, because they expressly tell them, that they cannot do it. They find a difficulty in exhorting them to seek for a new heart with their old heart of enmity and unbelief, because this is exhorting them to continue in sin, and actually joining with them in their rebellion against God. And they find a difficulty in exhorting them to stand still and do nothing, because this is contrary to every dictate of reason and scripture. What then to say to sinners consistently with truth, and consistently with their own opinion, that they cannot and ought not to make them a new heart, they are totally at a

loss. Pressed with these evils on every side, they commonly of late, choose what they esteem the least; that is, to neglect preaching the gospel to *sinners*. The essence of preaching the gospel to sinners consists in urging and exhorting them to the duty of immediate repentance and faith. So John the Baptist preached. "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." So Christ preached after his forerunner. "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; Repent ye, and believe the gospel." After Christ had finished his ministry, he commanded his Apostles and their successors to preach the gospel in the same manner as he did. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Paul and the other apostles obeyed his command, and said plainly to sinners, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God." Do not many ministers, at the present day neglect to follow the example of Christ and the Apostles, and totally omit exhorting sinners to repent and believe the gospel? If we look into the late publications of some very eminent Divines,* shall we find a single exhortation to sinners, to become reconciled to God, to give God their hearts, to repent, to submit, or to do any thing whatever in a holy and benevolent manner? Such a want of conformity to the divine standard of preaching, is undoubtedly owing, in all cases, to a be-

* Dr. Smalley and Dr. Strong.

lief that sinners are passive in regeneration, and cannot make them a new heart. Let ministers, therefore, only renounce the false notion of passivity in regeneration, and they will find no more difficulty in exhorting sinners, than in exhorting saints, to do their duty. They will see the same propriety in exhorting sinners to make them a new heart, or to repent and believe immediately, as in exhorting saints to grow in grace, and perfect holiness in the fear of God. And such preaching will approve itself to the consciences of both saints and sinners.

4. Since it is the duty of sinners to make them a new heart, they have no excuse for the neglect of any other duty. When they are urged to love God, repent of sin, believe the gospel, make a publick profession of religion, or to do any thing in a holy and acceptable manner, they are always ready to excuse themselves for their negligence, by pleading their inability to change their hearts. This they say is the work of God; and until he pleases to appear for them, and takes away their stony hearts and gives them hearts of flesh, they cannot internally obey any of his commands, and therefore must be excused for all their delays, neglects, and deficiences in duty. But if it be their duty, in the first instance, to make them a new heart, then, according to their own plea, they have no excuse for neglecting any other act of obedience to the divine commands. If it were their duty to *begin*, they acknowledge, it would be their duty to *persevere* in obedience; and by acknowledging this, they virtually give up every excuse, and become self-condemned for all their internal as well as external transgressions of the divine law. The moment, they feel the propriety and force of the precept in the text, "to make them a new heart and a new spirit," their mouths are stop-

ped, and they stand guilty and inexcusable before God. As soon as this commandment comes, sin revives, and they die. They find, that they cannot love God, merely because they hate him, and that they hate him without a cause, which is their criminality, not excuse.

5. If sinners ought to make them a new heart, then it must be their own fault, if they finally perish. They will have no right to plead, that God did not do enough for them; but must forever own and feel, that they did not do enough for themselves. They cannot be lost, if they only do their duty, and make them a new heart. But if they finally neglect this duty, they will justly expose themselves to eternal death. Hence God solemnly reminds them, that their future happiness or misery depends upon their choice; and if they perish, it must be wholly owing to their own folly and guilt. "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God. Wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

SERMON XI.

THE TREASURES OF A GOOD AND EVIL HEART.

MATTHEW xii, 35.

A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

IT was never our Saviour's intention to preach against Moses and the prophets, but only to explain their writings, and take off the false glosses, which were put upon them by false teachers. Though these men adopted the language of the inspired writers, and acknowledged the distinction between saints and sinners; yet they had no idea of what constituted this distinction. They ignorantly supposed, that the precepts and prohibitions of the divine law had no respect to the heart, but only to external actions. And hence they denominated men either good or bad, saints or sinners, according to their outward appearance, rather than according to their internal views and feelings. But our Saviour represented this notion as a great and essential error. He said to his hearers; "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God." And after this, he told the Scribes and Pharisees themselves, that their righteousness was no better than hypocrisy, because it wholly consisted in mere external obedience. "Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." But as Christ meant to instruct

the ignorant, as well as refute the erroneous, he clearly described the essential distinction between a good man and a bad man, and expressly asserted, that this distinction lies in the heart, which stamps the moral quality of all the actions that proceed from it. "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." This, like many other figurative expressions of Christ, has often been misunderstood and misapplied. It has frequently been employed in favour of a sentiment, which appears totally inconsistent with that very distinction between saints and sinners, which Christ plainly intended to assert. In order, therefore, to investigate and establish the important truths, which our Lord meant to convey in this passage, I shall endeavour,

I. To describe the good treasure of the heart.

II. To describe the evil treasure of the heart.

III. To make it appear, that it is the treasure of the heart, which justly denominates men either good or or evil.

I. I am to describe the good treasure of the heart.

The whole of this good treasure summarily consists in general benevolence. Our Saviour comprises all true virtue, holiness, or moral goodness in love to God and man. When he was asked, which is the great commandment in the law? he said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." According to this infallible exposition of the law, it requires nothing morally good but what partakes of the nature of pure, disinterested benevolence.

The question now is, Why does Christ call this benevolence, which comprises all moral goodness, a good treasure? Treasure is a general name for abundance; and Christ uses the term in this sense, in the verse immediately preceding the text, where he says, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." But what abundance, or what treasure can there be in a good heart, which consists in love? Is not love perfectly pure, simple, and uncompounded? How then can there be any propriety in calling it a treasure, which generally comprises both a variety and a multiplicity of things? It is easy, however, to discover the propriety of this expression. Though true love be of a simple, uncompounded nature; yet it is capable of spreading into a variety of branches, which taken all together, form a rich treasure of moral goodness. I will now lay open, as clearly and distinctly as I can, all the parts or parcels of the good treasure of the good heart.

1. A good heart contains good *affections*.

It always is more or less affected, by every object presented to it. If a proper object of benevolence be presented, it feels benevolence. If a proper of object complacence be presented it feels complacence. If a proper object of gratitude be presented, it feels gratitude. If a vile and odious object be presented, it feels a proper displeasure, hatred, or aversion. These inward motions or exercises of the good heart, which are excited by the bare perception of objects, and which do not produce any external actions, are properly called *affections*, in distinction from all other emotions and exercises, of the heart, which influence to action. And these immanent affections of the good heart are extremely numerous, because they are perpetually arising in the mind, whether the person be sitting, or walking, or speaking, or reading, or barely thinking. The good

heart is often as deeply and sensibly affected by *invisible*, as by *visible* objects. Some of the purest and best affections of the good heart are put forth in the view of the character, perfections, and designs of the Deity, and while the mind is intensely employed in contemplating things past, present, and to come. Such holy and virtuous affections compose the largest portion of the good treasure of the good heart.

2. The good heart contains good *desires*. These naturally flow from true benevolence, in the view of any absent and distant good. The man of a good heart extends his good desires as far as his knowledge extends. He desires that God may be glorified, and that his creatures may be happy. He desires to do good to himself, and where his ability or opportunity of doing good fails, he desires that God would enable and dispose others to do good. Whenever he sees any attainable good, he sincerely desires that it may be attained. Were his views as extensive as the views of the Deity, his benevolent desires would be equally extensive. But though his desires are bounded by the scantiness of his knowledge; yet they are very numerous and perfectly virtuous, and comprise a good share of the good treasure of his heart.

3. The good heart contains good *intentions*. It not only desires good to be done, but actually intends to do good. David had a good intention, when it was in his heart to build a house for the honour and worship of God. The desires of doing good, are different from the intentions of doing good. Good men may desire to do many things, which they do not intend to do; and they may intend to do many things, which they never do. Some carry their intentions of doing good much further forward than others. They intend to do many things for the benefit of individuals and

the public, in days, and months, and years to come. But very often they never find an opportunity, or a disposition, to carry all their good intentions into execution. Paul tells us, that he failed of fulfilling his good intentions. "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not." It is true, however, that the failure of good men in fulfilling their good intentions, only proves their great imperfection or inconstancy in goodness. For, their good intentions, whether they act agreeably to them or not, are good in their own nature, and belong to the good treasure of their hearts.

4. The good heart contains good *volitions*. These are imperative acts of the will, and have immediate influence upon external conduct. Neither good affections, nor good desires, nor good intentions, are inseparably connected with bodily exertions. But volitions are the next, immediate, and efficient cause of external action. When we put forth any bodily effort, we are conscious of a will or volition to move or speak. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." A good heart will naturally produce good volitions, which are the immediate natural cause of good actions. It is in this sense, that "a good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things." Good volitions must always go before good actions, because these derive all their moral quality from the volitions, from which they originate. If a man's hand or body moves without his own volition, that motion is not his action, and has no moral quality attached to it. All actions are voluntary motions, and take their moral quality from the nature of the volitions, which give them existence. Holy and virtuous volitions render all the actions proceeding from them truly holy and virtuous. Such volitions,

therefore, are to be numbered among the other good treasures of the heart. And lest it should be deemed an omission, I will add,

5. That the good heart contains good *passions*. These are, however, precisely the same as good affections, only raised to a higher degree. When any good affections rise to such a pitch as to excite great sensibility of body or mind, they are then commonly denominated *passions*. Holy love may rise to admiration, hope, fear, joy, sorrow, grief, pity, compassion, indignation, anger, wrath, and even vengeance. Though God never admires, nor hopes, nor fears, yet he exercises joy, sorrow, grief, pity, compassion, indignation, wrath, anger, and holy vengeance. And all, or nearly all these holy passions Christ felt and expressed while he tabernacled in flesh. He rejoiced, he grieved, he wept, and from time to time manifested pity, compassion, indignation, wrath, and anger. Holy passions flow from holy affections; or in other words, holy affections, under certain circumstances, will naturally rise to holy passions.

I have now enumerated all the parts or parcels of the good heart. But you will observe, that I have not mentioned *appetites* as belonging to the good treasure. The reason is, they do not flow from the heart, nor stand connected with any class of moral exercises. There is nothing morally good or evil in hunger, thirst, or any natural taste. This does not depend upon a good or bad heart, but upon the constitution and state of the body. But good affections, good desires, good intentions, good volitions, and good passions, are all of a moral and virtuous nature, and belong to the good treasure of the heart.

II. Let us inquire what is to be understood by the evil treasure of the evil heart. If the good treasure of

the good heart has been properly described, it will be easy to discover what is the evil treasure of the evil heart. It must be something directly opposite to the good treasure. As the good treasure consists in benevolence, so the evil treasure must consist in selfishness. And this selfishness naturally branches out into evil affections, evil desires, evil intentions, evil volitions, and evil passions. There is no moral evil but what may be found in one or other of these moral exercises, which contain all the treasures of wickedness in any wicked heart. The good heart and evil heart are both made up of exercises; but their exercises, whether affections, desires, intentions, volitions, or passions, are diametrically opposite in their moral quality. The good treasure of the good heart consists in the various modifications of benevolence, but the evil treasure of the evil heart consists in the various modifications of selfishness.

It only remains to show,

III. That men are either good or evil, according to the good or evil treasure of the heart. This truth lies upon the very face of the text. "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." The good treasure of the heart, which consists in good exercises, constitutes a good man; and the evil treasure of the heart, which consists in evil exercises, constitutes an evil man. The truth of this important point will clearly appear from various considerations.

1. That every man forms his opinion of himself, by the exercises of his heart. If a man be conscious of having good affections, good desires, good intentions, and good volitions and passions, he naturally forms a good opinion of himself, and believes, that all the world would form the same opinion of him, if they

could look into his heart, and see what passes there. But if, on the other hand, a man be conscious of having evil affections, desires, designs, and passions, he is constrained to condemn himself, and to believe, that every body would condemn him, if they could only discover the real exercises of his heart. Men may, indeed, judge amiss respecting the good or bad treasure of their hearts, but still they are constrained to form their opinion of themselves, by this, and no other criterion. They cannot believe themselves to be good, while they are conscious, that their hearts are bad; nor can they believe themselves to be bad, while they are conscious, that their hearts are good. No person presumes to judge of his own moral character, by his abilities, or by his professions, or by his external conduct; but by the exercises of his heart. This must be a convincing evidence to every individual, that it is the heart alone, which forms and stamps every moral character.

2. It is the dictate of common sense, that nothing can properly denominate men either morally good or morally evil, but that in which they are really active. They may be constrained to see, and hear, and feel, and taste, and even to remember and judge; and, in all such cases, they are neither active, nor accountable. But they are never compelled to love or hate, to choose or refuse, to rejoice or mourn, to hope or fear, to forgive or revenge. In all their affections, desires, intentions, volitions, and passions, they are altogether active, and justly deserve either praise or blame. As all their agency lies in their hearts, so their hearts alone render them morally good or morally evil. This is agreeable to the common sense of mankind in all cases, in which they have an opportunity to judge. Let a man be accused for any of his conduct, if he can only make it appear, that he acted from a good intention, he will be justified and approved. Or let a

man be commended for any of his conduct, if afterwards it appears, that he acted from a bad intention or design, he will be universally condemned, rather than applauded. All mankind judge alike upon this subject, and either praise or blame each other for the goodness, or badness of their hearts, in which their moral agency entirely consists.

3. The whole current of Scripture confirms the point under consideration. Solomon says, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." That is, his heart forms his moral character, and constitutes him a good or bad man. And our Saviour himself says, "the light of the body is the eye: if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." By a single eye he means a good heart, and by an evil eye an evil heart. In a word, he means to assert, in the most strong and striking language, that a good heart makes a good man, and a bad heart makes a bad man. This truth is too plain to need any further illustration or proof. It is not only agreeable to scripture and common sense, but it is founded in the very nature of things. Even the Deity cannot constitute any other standard of moral character, than this of the good and bad treasure of the heart. The man of a holy heart must necessarily be a holy man, and the man of an unholy heart must necessarily be an unholy man. This is the only essential distinction, that can exist between a saint and a sinner.

Now, the subject which we have been considering, may serve to throw light upon some points of importance, which need to be better understood, than they commonly are.

1. What has been said may serve to give us a clear and just idea of the heart. Some suppose the heart is

something distinct, not only from perception, reason, and conscience, but also from all moral exercises. When they undertake to define the heart, which is very seldom, they sometimes call it a faculty, sometimes a principle, and more frequently a taste; but whether they call it by one or other of these names, they agree in maintaining, that it is something wholly distinct from all moral exercises, and the source from which they all proceed. But it appears from what has been said in this discourse, that the heart is so far from being a moral faculty, principle, or taste, and the foundation of moral exercises, that it wholly consists of moral affections, desires, intentions, volitions, and passions. These are the good and evil treasure, which compose the good and evil heart, and produce every good and evil action. This is representing the heart in the same light, in which our Saviour represents it in the text. He represents the heart as the immediate source of external actions. But if the heart be a faculty, principle, or taste, prior to and distinct from all affections, desires, volitions, and passions, then it cannot be the next, immediate cause or source of external actions. These immediately proceed from moral exercises, and not from a dormant, inactive principle, taste, or faculty. The Scripture gives us no account of any heart but what consists in the various exercises or modifications of benevolence, or selfishness. Nor is any other heart either necessary, or even conceivable. No other heart is necessary in order to men's doing good or evil. Perception, reason, and conscience, are all the natural faculties necessary to constitute a moral agent. These form a capacity for loving and hating, choosing and refusing, acting and neglecting to act. There is no occasion for a distinct faculty of will, as has been generally supposed, in or-

der to put forth external actions, or internal exercises. Though the natural faculties of perception, reason, and conscience are necessary to form a capacity, and to lay men under moral obligation, to exercise right affections, desires, intentions, volitions, and passions, yet these moral exercises do not spring from or grow out of any or all those natural faculties. It is God, who worketh in men both to will and to do. Moral exercises flow from a divine operation upon the mind of a moral agent, and not from any natural faculty, principle, or taste, enabling him to originate his own internal exercises, or external actions. And as no other heart, than that which consists in moral exercises, is necessary, in order to men's doing good or evil; so no other heart is conceivable. Take away all affections, desires, intentions, volitions, and passions from the mind, and there will be no heart left, nor any thing, which can deserve either praise or blame. What we call the heart, what the divine law requires or forbids, and what we approve or condemn in ourselves or others, wholly consists in benevolent or selfis hexercises. If we search every corner of the human mind, we can find no heart, worthy of praise or blame, but what is composed of good or evil affections, desires, intentions, and volitions. A good heart is a good treasure of good exercises; and an evil heart is an evil treasure of evil exercises. And every man in the world is conscious of having such a good, or such an evil heart; which creates self-approbation, or self-condemnation.

2. This subject teaches us, that neither a good, nor evil heart can be transmitted, or derived from one person to another. Adam could no more convey his good or evil heart to his posterity, than he could convey his good or evil actions to them. Nothing can

be more repugnant to scripture, reason, and experience, than the notion of our deriving a corrupt heart from our first parents. If we have a corrupt heart, as undoubtedly we have; it is altogether our own, and consists in evil affections and other evil exercises, and not in any moral stain, pollution, or depravity derived from Adam. This clearly appears from the very essence of an evil heart, which consists in evil exercises, and not in any thing prior to; distinct from, or productive of, evil emotions or affections. The absurd idea of imputed and derived depravity originated from the absurd idea of the human heart, as being a principle, propensity, or taste, distinct from all moral exercises. But since every man's corrupt heart is his own, and consists in his own free and voluntary exercises, he ought to repent, and look to God for pardoning mercy. And unless he does this, he must perish; for God has said, the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, but the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

3. This subject teaches us, that religion wholly consists in good affections. It is generally supposed, that religion partly consists in a good heart, and partly in the good affections, or holy exercises, which flow from the heart. This seems to have been President Edwards's opinion; who, in his Treatise on the affections, expressly says, that religion *chiefly* consists in affections. It appears, that he was led into this opinion, by supposing that a good heart is a good taste, or good principle, which lays a foundation for good affections or holy exercises. But if the leading sentiment in this discourse be true, there is no ground to suppose, that a good heart consists in a good taste, or a good principle, or in any thing besides good affections. It is undoubtedly true, that all virtue, piety, and moral goodness consists in a holy or benevolent heart. But ac-

cording to scripture and experience, a holy or benevolent heart altogether consists in holy or benevolent affections. These comprize all good exercises, desires, intentions, volitions, and passions, which are the sum and comprehension of all true religion and vital piety.

4. This subject teaches us, that the passions belong to the heart, and consequently are all either morally good, or morally evil. Since they are only the affections carried to a high degree of sensibility, they must partake of the nature of the affections from which they arise. Those which arise from benevolent affections are all virtuous and benevolent; and those which arise from selfish affections are all selfish and sinful. The benevolent passions are to be freely and perfectly exercised, but the selfish passions are to be entirely mortified, and not merely restrained. Those who have treated of the passions, have generally, if not universally, considered them as neither good nor evil, only as they are directed and employed to a good or evil purpose. Hence they strongly urge the duty of properly regulating and employing the passions. They represent them as wings or sails to the soul, which, by a proper regulation, may greatly assist us in the practice of virtue, and more especially in the duties of devotion. But this is a very erroneous representation of the passions, which are all either benevolent or selfish, and in their lowest as well as in their highest degree, either virtuous or sinful. The benevolent passions are, in every degree, virtuous, and need no regulation; but the selfish passions are, in every degree, sinful, and ought to be entirely extinguished. Many seem to imagine, they may innocently indulge any of their passions, if they only restrain them from breaking out into any improper words or actions. But the truth is, every selfish passion, whether outwardly ex-

pressed, or inwardly smothered in the breast, is altogether criminal, and ought to be not merely restrained, but instantly and utterly destroyed.

5. It appears from the general tenor of this discourse, that men are active, and not passive, when they experience a change of heart. Under the renewing influence of the divine Spirit, they exercise benevolent, instead of selfish affections. Their new heart consists in new affections, desires, and passions, and not in any new faculty, principle, or taste. They put off the old man, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. They experience no alteration, or obstruction, or enlargement, in their natural powers, by the transforming influences of the Spirit. Regeneration is altogether a moral, and not a physical change, and wholly consists in new and holy affections, according to the plain declaration of the Apostle, who expressly says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, not the principle of love; joy, not the principle of joy; peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness," not the principle of these holy and gracious affections. There is no intimation in Scripture, that men are more passive in regeneration, than in sanctification; or that they are ever passive, under the special influence of the Spirit of God.

6. We may justly infer from what has been said, the propriety of God's requiring sinners to change their own hearts. This he certainly does require them to do, either directly or indirectly, in every command he has given them. When he requires them to make them new hearts, to rend their hearts, to purify their hearts, and to give him their hearts, he directly requires them to change their hearts. And he indirectly requires them to do this, when he calls upon them to repent, to believe, to turn from their transgressions, and cease to

do evil, and learn to do well. All these commands require them to put forth new affections, desires, and volitions, which is precisely the same thing as changing their hearts. And this appears to be perfectly reasonable. But we could see no propriety in any of these divine precepts, if they required any thing prior to the free and voluntary exercise of holy affections. If a new heart consisted in a new faculty, principle, or taste, there could be no more propriety in God's requiring sinners to change their heart, than in requiring them to add another cubit to their stature. But if a new and holy heart consists in new and holy affections; then there is the same propriety in God's requiring sinners to change their hearts, as in requiring them to do any duty whatever. Indeed, it is only in the view of the heart as consisting in free and voluntary exercises, that we can see the consistency of the divine commands to sinners with the doctrine of regeneration. While they view the new heart as distinct from new affections, and as the principle from which they proceed, they will plead the want of a new heart as an insurmountable obstacle, or natural inability, in the way of their loving God, repenting of sin, or doing any thing in a holy manner. They will plead, that they cannot give themselves a new and holy principle, or change their own hearts. But as soon as they are convinced that a new heart consists entirely in new and holy affections; and that they need no new faculty or principle, in order to exercise such new and holy affections, they necessarily feel their obligation to make them a new heart and a new spirit, and to obey every divine command. They find they have no excuse for continuing any longer in impenitence or unbelief.

Finally, it appears from the whole tenor of this discourse, that it is the immediate duty of both saints

and sinners to put away all the evil treasure of their hearts. Saints have no right to live any longer in sin, or to have another evil affection, desire, or passion. They ought to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God. There is but one law for the saint and the sinner; and that is the law of love, which requires perfect purity of heart. It is, therefore, the immediate and important duty of sinners, to change their hearts, to change their course, to return to God, and to devote themselves entirely and forever to his service.

SERMON XII.

THE KEEPING OF THE HEART A PRACTICABLE AND IMPORTANT DUTY.

PROV. iv, 23.

Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life.

SINCE this divine precept enjoins a duty, which ought to be universally understood and universally practised, I shall endeavour to set it in a clear and instructive light, by showing what it is to keep the heart, how it is to be kept, and why it is to be kept with all diligence.

1. We are to consider what the duty is which is required in the text: "Keep thy heart." This mode of expression plainly intimates, that the heart needs to be kept; and the necessity of keeping it as plainly supposes, that it is prone to go astray. To prevent it, therefore, from going wrong, is to keep it in the sense of the text. There is no possibility of restraining the heart from all exercises or emotions. As no man who opens his eyes in a clear day, can help perceiving the light; so no man who perceives any visible or invisible object can help being pleased or displeased, or having some exercises of heart about it. The injunction in the text, therefore, does not require men to lay a total restraint upon their hearts and reduce themselves to stoick insensibility; but only to restrain all their free, voluntary affections from every thing improper and sinful. This implies two things.

1. To keep the heart from all improper objects. Amidst the innumerable objects, which surround mankind, some ought to engage their affections at one

time, and some at another. They always ought to keep their hearts from all those objects, which are not connected with their present duty. But they are extremely apt to let their hearts wander from proper to improper objects. How often does it happen on the sabbath, that they allow the world and the things of the world to engage their affections, instead of fixing their whole hearts upon those religious and divine objects, which are inseparably connected with the duties of the day? And when they are engaged in any duty, whether secular or spiritual, how often do their hearts insensibly wander with the fool's eyes to the ends of the earth, and dwell upon things, with which their present duty has no connexion nor concern? Men have always some duty to perform, and their hearts ought to be engaged in that duty and in nothing else. One thing, therefore, implied in keeping the heart, is to guard it against every object, which has no proper connexion with present duty. And another thing is,

2. To guard it against all improper affections. While the heart is placed upon proper objects, it may have very improper affections towards them; and this not only may be the case, but is extremely apt to be the case. Men are called to attend to worldly objects; but forbidden to exercise improper affections towards them. Men are called to attend to spiritual and divine objects; but forbidden to exercise improper affections towards them. But how often do they feel improperly towards the world and the things of the world, and towards God and the things of God? They should always keep their hearts from loving hateful objects, and from hating lovely objects. Though it be more difficult, yet it is more important, to keep the heart from improper affections, than from improper objects; but the precept in the text requires men to keep their

hearts from both these evils. And so long as they do keep their hearts from both improper objects and improper affections, they completely fulfil their duty.

I proceed as proposed,

II. To show how the heart is to be kept.

Since God requires men to keep their hearts at all times and under all circumstances, there must be some way in which they can perform this constant, necessary, and arduous duty. And what has been said in explaining the duty, naturally suggests the proper manner of performing it. The duty consists in restraining the heart from improper objects and improper affections. And to do this it is necessary,

1. That men should always attend to those objects only, with which they are properly concerned. While they are pursuing their secular affairs, they are properly concerned with secular objects. They cannot perform any worldly business without attending to it. The farmer must attend to his farm, the mechanick must attend to his trade, the attorney must attend to the law, the preacher must attend to divinity, the statesman must attend to the affairs of state, and all men must attend to their religious and eternal concerns. While their attention is employed upon these and other proper objects, their hearts will be effectually restrained from wandering. The minds of men must be in perpetual exercise in the view of right or wrong objects. But so long as they attend to proper objects, they cannot attend to those which are impertinent or improper. Every man's mind would be perpetually fixt on one single object, were no other object presented to divert his attention. Were one object constantly impressed upon the mind, and but one, it would be as impossible for the mind to think of any other object, as to create a world. And the only reason, why any one object

which ever possessed our mind does not still possess it, is because other objects have crowded it out and taken its place. We know, that an object of surprize will sometimes occupy the whole mind, by excluding all other objects, and throw it into a momentary distraction. The mind cannot be diverted from any object which seizes it, only by the intervention of some other object, equally great, novel, or interesting. This we see daily verified in children. Let them be ever so much affected, by any particular object, they may be easily composed by almost any thing new or strange. Hence the common use of those trifles, in turning the attention and the tide of affection in children. In this respect, men and children are exactly alike. Let any man only attend to proper objects, and his heart will be completely restained from wandering. The heart cannot move towards any object, without being led by the eye, or the ear, or the understanding, or the imagination, or some other natural faculty of the mind. The natural faculties, in this case, absolutely govern the heart, and it is for this reason, that men are properly required to keep their hearts. They have natural power to keep their hearts from all improper objects, because they have natural power to fix them upon proper objects or those with which their duty is connected. This is plainly intimated by Solomon in the words succeeding the text. "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eye-lids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet: turn not to the right hand nor to the left; remove thy foot from evil." Let men direct their attention to proper objects, and their affections will infallibly follow their attention. The truth of this every one knows by his own experience. He never found his heart wandering, while his whole attention was engaged in some secular employment or

religious duty. There is no danger of the heart's going astray, while the attention is entirely fixt upon those objects which ought to engage it. Men may always keep their hearts from all improper objects, by fixing their attention steadily upon proper ones. Though it does not always depend upon their choice, what objects shall be presented and what ideas shall be suggested, by causes from without; yet it does always depend upon their choice, what objects or ideas they shall make the subjects of particular attention. And if they only avoid seeing, hearing, and thinking such things as they have no occasion to see, hear, and think, by fixing their whole attention upon those things which lie in the path of duty, they will effectually keep their hearts from all improper objects. This leads me to observe,

2. That men must pursue the same method to keep their hearts from improper affections, as from improper objects. To keep their hearts from improper objects, they must attend to good ones, and to keep their hearts from improper affections, they must exercise good ones. To keep the heart from every wrong feeling is more difficult, as well as more important, than to keep it from wrong objects. The heart of the sons of men is naturally full of evil, and fully set in them to do evil. They are naturally disposed to exercise sinful affections towards all objects, which strike their minds or engage their attention. Let them be where they will; let them be engaged in what business they will; let them attempt what duties they will; their hearts are prone to go astray, and spoil all their exertions and performances. This evil propensity they ought to restrain, at all times and under all circumstances. But how can they perform this duty? The answer is easy. Let them exercise good affections. As proper objects will always exclude improper ones from the mind; so

proper affections will always exclude improper ones from the heart. While men exercise such affections as God requires, they will not be troubled with such as he forbids; and while they keep their hearts in a holy frame, unholy affections cannot intrude, or interrupt their virtuous and benevolent feelings. Love will exclude hatred, as well as hatred exclude love. Faith will exclude unbelief, as well as unbelief faith. Repentance will exclude impenitence, as well as impenitence repentance. Submission will exclude opposition, as well as opposition submission. Humility will exclude pride, as well as pride humility. In a word, any gracious exercise will exclude any sinful one; and it is only by the exercise of holiness, that the heart can be kept from sin. Hence the propriety and importance of that command given to christians: "Keep yourselves in the love of God." By observing this divine precept, and living in the continual exercise of grace, they may keep their hearts from every sinful affection, in whatever situation they are placed, or with whatever objects they are surrounded. There is one and the same way for all men to keep their hearts from improper affections and improper objects. Let them only attend to proper objects, and exercise right affections, and they will never see, nor hear, nor think, nor speak, nor act wrong, while they are passing through the varying scenes of this present evil world. It is now necessary to show, as proposed,

III. The importance of men's keeping their hearts with the greatest care and constancy. This Solomon forcibly enjoins in the text. "Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life." The heart lies at the bottom of all human actions, and is the primary source of every thing that is worthy of praise or blame in mankind. All their goodness and all their

badness proceeds from the heart, which entirely forms their moral character. And if they will only consider this inseparable connexion between their hearts and lives, they must feel the great importance of keeping their hearts with all diligence. For,

1. While they neglect to keep their hearts, all their moral exercises will be sinful. There is no medium between their feeling right or wrong; and, of consequence, they must always exercise either holy or unholy affections. The moment they neglect to keep their hearts in the love of God, or in the exercise of grace, some sinful affection will succeed, and continue, until they renew their watch, and revive their holy exercises. Those who totally neglect to keep their hearts, live in the continual exercise of selfish and sinful affections. Whether they love or hate, whether they hope or fear, whether they are vain or serious, the whole train of their affections is evil and only evil continually. The same is true of those who habitually keep their hearts, but occasionally neglect them. While they neglect to keep their hearts, whether the term be shorter or longer, all their moral exercises are selfish, and diametrically opposite to the law of love. Since God looketh on the heart, and not on the outward appearance, and requires truth in the inward parts, it is of great importance, that men should keep their hearts with all diligence, and suppress all internal motions and affections, which are unholy and sinful.

2. While men neglect to keep their hearts, all their thoughts will be sinful. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. The thought of foolishness is sin." All thoughts become sinful, when they are improperly approved or disapproved by the heart. The heart always does have some feeling towards all the thoughts, which pass

through the mind, whether they are suggested by the visible world, or by Satan, or by the Spirit of God. Though bare thoughts have no moral good or evil in themselves considered, yet in connexion with the heart they all acquire a good or bad moral quality. If the heart approve bad thoughts, or disapprove good thoughts, it turns them all into sin. No thought is indifferent after the heart has been exercised about it. This shows the necessity of keeping the heart with all diligence, lest it should pollute the whole train of thoughts, which are rapidly passing through the mind, and render them all vile and odious in the sight of God.

3. While men neglect to keep their hearts, all their words, as well as their thoughts and affections, will be sinful. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." All words are the fruit of the heart. They are first conceived and approved there, before they are uttered. Every idle, impure, false, profane, blasphemous expression comes from within, out of the heart. Men never speak but of choice; so that their hearts are concerned in all their vain or serious conversation: and unless they keep them with all diligence, their whole discourse will be corrupt in the sight of God, however pure, or pleasing, or even edifying it may appear in the view of their fellow creatures. The best as well as the worst language is sinful, when it flows from a corrupt heart. The heart, therefore, must be always kept with the greatest care and attention, lest some sinful word, some injurious expression, some corrupt discourse proceed out of the mouth.

4. While men neglect to keep their hearts, all their intentions, purposes, or designs will be evil. They cannot be said to form any design, until the heart has approved and adopted it. Every evil design is first form-

ed in the heart of the projector. The design of building Babel was first formed in the heart of some Babylonian. The design of destroying the male children of the Hebrews was first formed in the heart of some Egyptian. The design of cutting off the captive Jews was first formed in the heart of Haman. All the wars and calamities which have been brought upon the world, by ambitious and cruel tyrants, were first conceived, formed, and adopted in their hearts, which were totally selfish And all designs, which proceed from this corrupt source, will be sinful, whether they prove injurious or beneficial to the world. While men neglect to keep their hearts from selfishness, every purpose or design they form will be selfish and sinful. This renders the diligent keeping of the heart a constant and important duty.

5. Let men pursue what employments they will, whether publick or private, high or low, civil or religious, their daily business will become their daily sin, unless they keep their hearts with all diligence. "Out of the heart are the issues of life." As men's hearts are, so are all their employments. While they neglect their hearts, their ploughing and sowing, and reaping will be sin; their reading, and praying, and almsgiving will be sin; and every business which employs their hands, or heads, or tongues, or pens will be sin. Unless they keep their hearts right with God, and do every thing to his glory, he will condemn them as wicked and unfaithful servants.

6. Men must keep their hearts with all diligence, lest they abuse all the blessings of providence with which they are favoured. They may abuse their health and strength, their intellectual powers and acquired knowledge, their wealth and influence, and all their civil and religious advantages, by placing their supreme

affection upon these temporal and inferior objects. And unless they keep their hearts with constant and peculiar care, they will turn all their outward blessings into temptations to sin and aggravations of guilt. They can enjoy no earthly good, or common blessing of providence, with innocence and safety, any longer than they guard their hearts against every selfish affection. They will certainly abuse all their outward enjoyments, unless they keep their hearts under constant restraint.

7. The same diligence in keeping the heart is necessary, to prevent their abusing the troubles and afflictions which they are called to suffer. If they indulge a murmuring or repining spirit under divine corrections, they will become *moral*, as well as *natural* evils. There is never more need of keeping the heart, than under severe and lasting trials. While these continue, the afflicted ought to keep themselves constantly in the love of God, and cheerfully submit to his chastizing hand. But if they neglect to guard their hearts, all their sighs, and groans, and complaints will increase their guilt, and prepare them for greater evils in this life, or in the life to come.

Thus men will continually sin in all their affections, and thoughts, and words, and designs, and employments, and enjoyments, and sufferings, while they neglect to keep their hearts; and, therefore, it is of serious importance, that they should keep them with all diligence. There is no time, nor place, nor situation, which does not require the constant performance of this necessary duty. The necessity and obligation of guarding the heart lies upon young and old, saints and sinners, without a single exception.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from what has been said, that men

are never under a natural necessity of sinning. If they will only keep their hearts in the manner which God requires, they will always be secure against every moral evil. Though they may be tempted by the world, by wicked men, and by Satan, yet they may always resist and overcome all these external temptations. Christ was tempted by the world, by Peter, and by the Devil, but they could not draw his guarded heart astray. Satan tempted Job, by stripping him of every thing which he held most dear and valuable in life; but he kept his heart from rising against God, and sinned not. All men, at all times, are equally able to resist all the snares and temptations with which they are surrounded in this state of trial. Their eyes and ears and imaginations may be assaulted, but while they keep their hearts with due care, they may bid defiance to all their spiritual enemies. These can do them no harm, while they follow that which is good. So long as they set their affections on things above, things below cannot corrupt their hearts. They are just as able to resist all temptations, as they are to keep their hearts with all diligence. Let them only perform this duty, and it will give them the victory over the world and all the things of the world.

2. Since men can guard their hearts against evil, it is easy to see that they can guard their hearts against good. They can no more be laid under a natural necessity of becoming good, than of becoming evil. As they can resist all temptations to sin, so they can resist all motives to embrace the gospel and obey the divine commands. They can shut their eyes, stop their ears, and harden their hearts against every thing that can be said to them, or done for them, by those who seek to promote their spiritual welfare. They are entirely out of the reach of all the means of grace, which they can

abuse to their own ruin. And even the calls and admonitions of divine providence may be lost upon them, and only serve to increase their guilt and ripen them for future and aggravated destruction. This was exemplified by the conduct of those, who heard and rejected the preaching of Noah; by those who heard and despised the voice of Moses and the prophets; by those who heard and rejected the counsel of God, under the preaching of Christ and the apostles; and by those at this day, who wax worse and worse, under all the manurings and cultivations of the word, the providence and Spirit of God. Though divine truth may be conveyed to the ears, the understandings, and consciences of sinners, yet they can despise, or oppose it, and stifle convictions, and obstinately persist in the course to ruin. In a word, they can and will destroy themselves, unless God sees fit to change their hearts by his sovereign and irresistible grace.

3. We learn from what has been said, the imminent danger those are in, who neglect the duty enjoined in the text. This neglect all sinners are continually guilty of, in the whole course of their conduct. They never keep their hearts in the manner God requires. They suffer their hearts to rove from object to object, and to fix upon any object which gives them the most pleasure, or promises them the most profit. And though their curiosity, or interest, or peculiar circumstances sometimes constrain them to fix their attention upon spiritual and divine objects, yet they take occasion from them to indulge their selfishness, malignity, or contempt. So that all objects with which they are surrounded, all persons with whom they converse, all favours with which they are indulged, all afflictions with which they are visited, and all the instructions which are poured into their minds, have a natural and

powerful tendency to corrupt their hearts, and push them on in the path to destruction. Let them turn their eyes, or fix their attention where they will, they can see, and hear, and know nothing but what draws forth their corruptions, and increases both their guilt and danger. While they neglect to keep their hearts, they lie open to all the temptations of Satan, to all the seductions of wicked men, and to all the sin and guilt, which arises from the abuse of all their natural talents, temporal favours, and religious advantages. This awful truth all sinners under genuine conviction clearly see and sensibly feel, which cuts off all hope of salvation, but that which arises from the mere sovereign mercy of God.

4. We learn from what has been said, that none can be sincere in religion, who entirely neglect to keep their hearts. Their concern about their external conduct has no religion in it, while they are totally unconcerned about their internal views and feelings. There are many very strict and moral persons, who pay no regard to the motives of their conduct, and lay no restraint upon the corruption of their hearts. They mean to maintain a sober and regular life, while they set their hearts wholly upon the world, and indulge every selfish affection. They mistake morality for religion, and build their hopes of heaven upon a false and sandy foundation. But no external obedience or outward forms of worship, which flow not from a pure and holy heart, partake of the nature of true religion. This our Saviour abundantly taught, in the course of his preaching to those religious sects who flourished in his day, and were esteemed eminently pious. He told his disciples in his sermon on the mount, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in

no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." And he reproved the Scribes and Pharisees themselves in the most severe and solemn manner. "Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: *these* ought ye to have done, and not to leave the *other* undone. Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup, and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse *first* that which is within the cup and platter, that the *outside* of them may be *clean* also." Real saints keep their hearts with all diligence, but formalists and hypocrites neglect this duty, and expose themselves to be shut out of the kingdom of heaven.

5. We learn from what has been said, the nature of the christian warfare. It consists in watching, guarding, and keeping the heart. All true christians know, that they are naturally inclined to attend to improper objects, and to exercise improper affections. They view themselves in an enemy's land, where every person and object will lead them astray, unless they keep their eyes and hearts upon proper objects, and guard against every worldly or selfish affection. Their warfare consists not in attacking their spiritual enemies, but in avoiding, or resisting them, by every holy and virtuous exercise. They know, that while they keep their hearts in a holy and heavenly frame, neither Satan, nor the whole world can lead them into sin; but if they once allow their eyes, or ears, or hearts to wander, the veriest trifles are sufficient to make them stumble and fall, and will never fail to produce this fatal effect. In this spiritual warfare, they will find no discharge, nor even respite, until they leave the

present evil world, and arrive at that state of rest and perfection, which remains for the people of God.

6. This subject teaches christians the importance of their constantly and sincerely attending to all the means of grace, which God has appointed for their spiritual benefit. The reading of the holy Scriptures, the hearing of the gospel preached, the commemorating of the death of Christ at his table, the meditating much upon heavenly and divine objects, and especially the frequent and devout calling upon God in secret, private, and publick, will have a happy tendency to enliven and increase every religious affection, and keep them from all the paths of the destroyer. All the means of grace were appointed for the edifying and perfecting of the saints, who need such aids to carry them forward in the divine life, and to guard them against the dangers to which they are daily and constantly exposed. This is the only way in which they can have any ground to expect, they shall be always able to keep their hearts. By attending to good objects, they will exclude bad ones, and by exercising good affections, they will banish bad ones from their hearts. If they will constantly and faithfully improve the means of grace, God has promised they shall experience these happy effects. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; they shall grow like the cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing."

SERMON XIII.

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS ONLY FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

ACTS xiii, 38.

Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.

THE apostle Paul determined to know nothing, in his preaching, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Whether he preached to Jews or to Gentiles, he commonly and largely insisted upon the atonement of Christ, as the only foundation of pardon and acceptance in the sight of God. In the discourse which contains the text, he first speaks of the descent, the life, and death of Christ, and then represents what he did and suffered, as the only ground of the pardon and justification of sinners.

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." These words plainly teach us, that forgiveness is the only favour, which God bestows upon men, on Christ's account. In treating upon this subject, I shall,

I. Consider what we are to understand by forgiveness.

II. Consider what we are to understand by being forgiven, on Christ's account.

III. Make it appear, that forgiveness is the only favour, which God bestows upon men, on the account of Christ.

I. Let us consider what we are to understand by forgiveness.

To remit, to pardon, to forgive, are terms of the same import. To forgive a debt, is to cancel the obligation of the debtor to pay the sum which he engaged to pay. And to forgive sins is to cancel the obligation of the transgressor to suffer the punishment, which his sins deserve. Some have justly made a distinction between the guilt of blame and the guilt of punishment. When a man has sinned, he deserves to be blamed, and when he deserves to be blamed, he deserves to be punished. Every sin carries in it a desert of both blame and punishment, which never can be removed. The Deity himself cannot take away the demerit of sin, which is inseparable from its nature. After a man has once transgressed, his transgression will forever remain, and justly deserve both blame and punishment. But though God cannot remove the demerit of sin, yet he can free men from the punishment of it. And in this, the essence of forgiveness consists. So far as God frees men from the punishment due to them for sin, so far he actually forgives them. Forgiveness may be partial, or total. Partial forgiveness is the remission of part of the penal evil which the sinner deserves. Thus rebels are sometimes partially pardoned. They are freed from the punishment of death; but not from certain civil disadvantages, such as the deprivation of former privileges, and an incapacity for future preferments. But total forgiveness removes all penal pains, evils, or inconveniences arising from transgression. Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and in that which is to come. And though God forgives every believer the future punishment of all his sins; yet he reserves it in his own power to punish him in this life, as often and as severely as he sees best. So

that the forgiveness of sin in this life is not total, but partial. It consists, however, as far as it extends, in the prevention or removal of punishment. God does, for Christ's sake, absolve true believers from all punishment in a future state. He assures them, that they shall be saved from the wrath to come, and never suffer that eternal death, which is the proper and full wages of sin. Having shown what is to be understood by forgiveness, I proceed to consider,

II. What we are to understand by being forgiven for Christ's sake, or on his account.

Through Christ, for Christ's sake, on Christ's account, are phrases of one and the same signification. "*Through* this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins," says the apostle. Forgiveness comes through the medium of Christ. His atonement is the sole ground of pardon. God forgives for Christ's sake, or on account of what Christ has done to render it consistent with his character, to absolve or release the transgressor from bearing the punishment due to him for sin. Sometimes men forgive for the sake of their own honour or reputation; and sometimes they forgive for the sake of compassion towards the offender. But God never forgives for his own sake, nor for the sake of the sinner, but merely for Christ's sake. Neither his own honour, nor the sinner's misery, is the ground of his forgiveness, but simply the atonement of Christ. God can consistently punish sinners without respect to Christ; but he cannot consistently pardon them, or free them from deserved punishment, without respect to the Mediator. Without shedding of blood there is no remission. There must be a peculiar reason for God's forgiving the guilty. And the atonement of Christ is the only sufficient reason for his forgiving the guilty. This indeed is sufficient; and while he forgives sinners

entirely on Christ's account, he appears to be just as well as gracious. The way is now prepared to show,

III. That forgiveness is the only favour, which God bestows upon men, on Christ's account. This will appear, if we consider,

1. There was no need of an atonement, in order to God's bestowing any other favour, than forgiveness. He can shew favour to holy and innocent creatures, without any thing's being done to render the displays of his goodness consistent with his character. From mere benevolence, he has raised the holy angels to the highest degrees of holiness, and caused them to drink of those rivers of pleasure which perpetually flow at his right hand. And when man was formed in his own image, he treated him in the same manner in which he treated, and will forever treat, the angels of light. God placed him in the garden of Eden, and loaded him with benefits, as long as he continued holy and innocent. And even now, he bestows innumerable blessings upon his degenerate offspring, without respect to Christ. He causes his sun to rise and his rain to fall, upon the evil as well as the good, and grants as large a portion of the good things of this life to his enemies, as to his friends. There is no temporal favour so great, but he can bestow it upon the vilest of men, as a mere act of sovereignty, without the least respect to Christ as Mediator. But it is only through the atonement of Christ, that he can and does forgive sinners. And from this, we may justly conclude, that forgiveness is the only favour, which he grants to mankind merely for Christ's sake.

2. The great design of Christ's coming into the world and making atonement for sin, was to open the way for forgiveness. This appears from the whole current of scripture. The types of Christ, under the law, re-

present his atonement as being designed to lay the foundation for forgiveness only. The paschal lamb was a type of Christ's death. "Christ our passover, says the apostle, is slain for us." But the paschal lamb, which was slain to preserve the Israelites from that destruction, which fell upon the Egyptians, would not have been a proper type of the death of Christ, unless his death had been designed to lay the foundation of pardon or freedom from punishment. The bullock that was slain for the sins of Israel, was a type of Christ's laying down his life for the sins of the world. But this bullock is said to make atonement for the express purpose of forgiveness. So we repeatedly read in the fourth chapter of Leviticus. If the whole congregation sin, it is said, the priest shall kill the bullock, and make atonement for them, and their sin shall be forgiven. ver. 20. If a ruler sin, then the priest shall kill the bullock, and make atonement for him, concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven. ver. 26. Or if one of the common people sin, the priest shall kill the bullock, and make atonement for him, and his sin shall be forgiven. All the sacrifices for sin, under the Old Testament, were designed to lay a foundation for forgiveness. Hence says the apostle in his exposition of the types in his epistle to the Hebrews, "without shedding of blood is no remission." This shows, that the death or atonement of Christ was wholly designed to open the way for the remission of sin, or the exercise of pardoning mercy to penitent sinners.

The inspired writers represent the design of the sufferings and death of Christ in the same light. The evangelical Prophet says, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him; and by his stripes we are healed." When Christ appeared

and foretold his own death, he always represented it as being designed to lay a foundation for forgiveness, or to open the way for God to save sinners from the punishment of sin. "As Moses, says he, lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Again he says, "The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many." And when he instituted the memorials of his death, he clearly explained the design of it to his disciples. Having taken the cup, and given thanks, he said to them, "Drink ye all of it: For this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." The first time of his appearing to his disciples after his death, "He said unto them, these are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and *remission of sins* should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." In all these passages, Christ plainly intimates, that the great design of his death was to open the way for the pardon, remission, or forgiveness of sin. Agreeably to these declarations of Christ, his apostles represented forgiveness, as the great and only favour granted to sinners, on his account. Thus Peter preached to the awakened multitudes on the day of pentecost: "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their

heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the *remission of sins.*" In another discourse to persons in the same situation he says, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, *that your sins may be blotted out;*" that is, forgiven. And when he preached Christ to Cornelius and his family, he taught them, "that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive *remission of sins.*" This is precisely the same language which Paul holds in our text. "Be it known unto you therefore, that through this man is preached unto you the *forgiveness of sins.*" And Paul not only preached, that the atonement of Christ was designed to procure forgiveness only; but he also wrote in the same manner in his epistles, in which he professedly explains the design of Christ's death. Treating upon this subject in the third chapter of Romans, he says, "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the *remission of sins.*" He also says to the Galatians, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The obvious meaning of these words is, that pardon, forgiveness, or freedom from the curse of the law, is the great and sole benefit we receive on Christ's account. Thus the types of Christ, his own declarations, and the declarations of his apostles, unite to prove, that his atonement is the only ground of forgiveness, and forgiveness is the only favour, which God ever-

grants to men on account of it. And it will further confirm this truth, if we consider,

3. That believers are expressly said to be forgiven for Christ's sake. The apostle uses this phraseology in his exhortation to the Ephesians, when he says, "Be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God *for Christ's sake* hath forgiven you." In another place, speaking of Jesus whom God raised from the dead, he says, "Who delivered us from the wrath to come;" that is, from future and eternal punishment. He says again, "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Much more then, being *justified* by his blood, we shall be saved from *wrath* through him." By the blood of Christ here we are to understand his atonement, which the apostle says is the ground of justification, or freedom from eternal destruction, which is the proper expression of divine wrath. But there is one or two more expressions, which the apostle uses respecting forgiveness through Christ, that deserve particular notice. After telling the Ephesians, that they were chosen and accepted in Christ, he further observes, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, *the forgiveness of sins*." And he makes the same observation to the Colossians. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even *the forgiveness of sins*." The mode of expression, in these two passages, plainly implies, that forgiveness is the one peculiar favour, which God grants to believers, merely in respect to the redemption of Christ. And this was undoubtedly the apostle's meaning, otherwise he would not have selected forgiveness from all other divine favours, and represented it as the great and only blessing bestowed upon believers, on Christ's account, or merely for his sake.

But here it may be objected, that the great design of Christ's atonement was, to lay a foundation for the sanctification, rather than the forgiveness of sinners. To this purpose may be alleged that passage in the first of Matthew, where we read, "She shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall *save his people from their sins.*" Also that passage in Titus, in which it is said of Christ, "Who gave himself for us, that he might *redeem us from all iniquity,* and *purify* unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

To these and other passages of the same import, two things may be replied.

First, to be saved from sin generally means in scripture, to be saved from the punishment of it; which is precisely the same thing as forgiveness. There does not appear any need of atonement, in order to lay a foundation for the mere regeneration or sanctification of sinners. Though God could not have consistently forgiven Adam, the first moment after he had sinned, without an atonement; yet he might have renewed or sanctified him, as an act of mere sovereignty, without any atonement, and without forgiveness. Hence we may conclude, that it was not the primary or principal design of Christ in coming and dying for his people, to redeem or save them from the power and dominion of sin; but to save or redeem them from the punishment of it. Though God meant to raise the elect from a state of sin to a state of holiness; yet all that Christ had to do, as a Redeemer, for this purpose, was to open a way for a pardon, by making a full atonement for sin. This being done, it belonged to the office of the Holy Spirit, to sanctify and prepare them for the kingdom of glory.

But, secondly, as God means to sanctify none but those, whom he intends to pardon through the atonement of Christ; so his atonement is a remote, but not a next or immediate cause of their sanctification. It is only the occasion, or cause without which, none would be sanctified, or prepared for heaven. There appears to be no propriety in God's renewing and sanctifying any whom he means to shut out of heaven and consign to everlasting destruction, though such a mode of treating sinners would not be inconsistent with justice; because they would deserve eternal misery after they were sanctified, as much as they did before. But there is no ground to think, that God ever has sanctified, or ever will sanctify any but those whom he means to pardon and save. Hence it appears, that the atonement of Christ is designed to render it consistent with justice for God to pardon sinners, and consistent with wisdom to sanctify them. So that men are not sanctified on Christ's account, in the same sense in which they are pardoned or forgiven on his account. In a word, the atonement of Christ is the *occasion* of the sinner's regeneration, and the *sole ground* of his pardon or justification; which is perfectly agreeable to the leading sentiment in this discourse.

It may be further objected, that we are required to ask for other favours, besides forgiveness, in Christ's name, or for his sake; which seems to imply, that God bestows not only forgiveness, but every other favour, on Christ's account. Among other texts, the following plainly convey this idea. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that he should go and bring forth fruit, and that your

fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, and the Father by him."

To ask, or to do a thing, in Christ's name, very often means nothing more nor less, than asking or doing a thing, for the honour and glory of Christ. And this is the only proper meaning of the last of the above cited passages. And to ask, or to do any thing for the honour and glory of Christ, is entirely consistent with our asking for, and God's granting us forgiveness, for Christ's sake, in distinction from all other favours.

But we readily allow, there is a propriety in asking for every favour for Christ's sake, though God grants only forgiveness on his account. The propriety lies here. We always need forgiveness, when we ask for any favour; and to ask for any favour for Chirst's sake, is to ask for forgiveness first, and then for the favour we request. This, we presume, is the real intention of every sincere christian, when he asks for any divine favour, for Christ's sake. He feels his guilt, which stands in the way of his receiving any token of God's gracious approbation. And in this view of himself, he asks for favour in Christ's name; or that God would both forgive and shew mercy. It is only because he feels the need of forgiveness, that he mentions the name of Christ in his petitions before the throne of grace. But whether we have, or have not given the true sense of those texts, which require us to ask for every favour, in Christ's name, or for his sake; yet it is firmly believed, that their true meaning does not militate against the doctrine, that it is only forgiveness, which God grants to men merely on Christ's account.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If forgiveness be the only thing which God bestows upon men, through the atonement of Christ; then we may justly conclude, that his atonement did not consist in his obedience, but in his sufferings. Those who maintain, that his atonement wholly consisted in his obedience, suppose that it was designed only to open the way for God to renew and sanctify sinners. And if this were the only end to be answered by his atonement, it is difficult to see, why his atonement might not consist in his preaching, or in his working miracles, or in his wearing a seamless coat, or in his washing his disciple's feet, or in any act of obedience to his earthly or heavenly Father. Upon the supposition of his atonement being designed to lay a foundation for God's bestowing any other favour upon sinners, than pardoning mercy, we can see no reason why it should consist in sufferings rather than in obedience; or in obedience, rather than in sufferings; or in both, rather than in either. But if it were designed to lay a foundation for forgiveness only; then we can see a good reason why it should consist wholly in sufferings, rather than in obedience. His obeying for sinners could be no reason for God's forgiving them on his account; but his suffering for them could be a good reason for God's pardoning them on his account. His dying the just for the unjust; his tasting death for every man; or his suffering for those, who deserved to suffer, was doing what properly constituted an atonement for sin, according to our common ideas of an atonement; or doing that for which sin may be forgiven. It is the common opinion of mankind, that suffering, or the shedding of blood is the only thing that can make atonement, or lay a founda-

tion for the remission of sin. And since it appears from what has been said in this discourse, that pardon, forgiveness, or remission of sin, is the only thing which God does actually bestow upon mankind, on account of Christ's atonement, we may safely conclude, that his atonement consisted wholly in his sufferings, and neither partly, nor wholly in his obedience. It is the end, which the atonement of Christ was designed to answer and does answer, that enables us to determine wherein it consisted. And if this be true, all who believe, that the only end which Christ's atonement was designed to answer and does answer, was to lay a foundation for forgiveness, will also believe that it consisted altogether in his suffering and dying in the room of sinners.

2. If forgiveness be all that God bestows upon men, through the atonement of Christ; then forgiveness is not only a part, but the whole of justification. Calvinists have found a great deal of difficulty in explaining justification to their own satisfaction, or to the satisfaction of others. The reason is, that they have endeavoured to make it appear, that justification contains something more than pardon or forgiveness. The Assembly of divines say, "That justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he *pardoneth* all our sins, and *accepteth us as righteous in his sight*, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone." Agreeably to this definition, our Calvinistick divines generally maintain, that justification consists of two parts, namely, pardon of sin, and a title to eternal life. Pardon, they suppose, is granted on account of Christ's death, or *passive* obedience; and a title to eternal life is granted on account of his righteousness or *active* obedience. But we find no warrant in Scripture for thus dividing justification

into two parts, and ascribing one part to the sufferings of Christ, and the other part to his obedience. The apostle in our text and context uses the terms *forgiveness* and *justification*, in the same sense, or as signifying precisely the same thing. "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the *forgiveness* of sins: And by him all that believe are *justified* from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." When we look into the Old Testament, we there find *forgiveness* used to denote the same thing, that *justification* is used to denote in the New Testament. And it appears from the explanation, which we have given of forgiveness, that it means the removal of all the natural evil or punishment due to sin. Complete forgiveness, therefore, is complete justification. After a sinner is forgiven through the death, or blood, or sufferings of Christ, he can have no need of the obedience or righteousness of Christ, to recommend him to the favour of God, or entitle him to eternal life. When a rebel is fully forgiven, he is by that very act restored to the favour of his prince. So, when a penitent, believing sinner is fully forgiven, his very forgiveness restores him to the favour of God both in this life and that which is to come. It is a dictate of reason and scripture, that after a sinner is renewed and forgiven, he stands as fair to enjoy eternal life, as if he had never sinned and offended God. There is not the least foundation in scripture, for the distinction between the *active* and *passive* obedience of Christ, nor for the distinction between forgiveness and justification. It was what Christ suffered, that made the atonement for sin; that atonement is the sole ground of forgiveness; and forgiveness is the whole that God bestows upon men for Christ's sake. Hence forgiveness is not

merely a part, but the whole of what can be conceived to be contained in justification. And this representation of justification is not only scriptural, but plain and intelligible toeve ry capacity.

3. This subject shows, that there is no inconsistency in maintaining, that believers are justified entirely on Christ's account; and yet that they shall be rewarded for all their virtuous actions entirely on their own account.

The most plausible objection ever raised against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the law, has been founded upon what the scripture says concerning believers being finally rewarded for their own works. It must be allowed, that the scripture does plainly teach us, that all good men shall be rewarded for all their good deeds. "Say ye, to the righteous that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings." "The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward." "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart: for God now accepteth thy works." "I am thy shield, and exceeding great reward," says God to Abraham. "In keeping thy commandments there is great reward," says David to God. Christ declares, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, shall in no wise lose his reward." He taught the same doctrine in the parable of the talents, in which he represents each servant as receiving a reward in exact proportion to his virtue and fidelity. And in his account of the process of the last day, he represents the righteous as actually approved and rewarded solely on the account of their own virtuous and benevolent actions. It has been said, and may be said again, that these and ma-

ny other passages of scripture plainly prove that all good men will be finally rewarded for all their good works; but how is this consistent with the notion of believers being justified by faith alone, without the deeds of the law? Can it be supposed, that God justifies believers in this life upon a ground, which is different from that upon which he will approve, accept, and reward them, in the great day of retribution?

This objection has given much trouble to those, who hold to the scriptural doctrine of justification by faith alone, through the atonement of Christ. Their common reply to it is, that believers will not be finally rewarded *for* their works, but only *according* to their works, for Christ's sake. But this answer does not seem to be satisfactory. The inspired writers assert, in as plain terms as language affords, that believers shall be rewarded on their own account. They never once bring into view the atonement of Christ, when they speak of the final reward of the righteous. Besides, there appears to be an absurdity in supposing, that believers shall be rewarded *according* to their works, for Christ's sake. For, if they were to be rewarded for Christ's sake, it seems that they should be rewarded *equally*, since they all have an *equal* interest in Christ. If they are to be rewarded for *his*, and not for *their own* sake, they should certainly be rewarded *according* to *his*, and not according to *their own* virtue. If his righteousness be the *ground* of their reward, it should be also the *measure* of it. There appears to be no other way, therefore, to reconcile the doctrine of the justification of believers by faith alone, with the doctrine of their being rewarded according to their works, but by admitting the leading sentiment in this discourse. If we only admit, that all God bestows upon believers, for Christ's sake, is the forgiveness of their sins; then

we can easily see how he can reward them according to their works, for their own sake. After he has forgiven them on Christ's account, there is nothing to prevent his rewarding them, on their own account. This may be easily illustrated by a put case. Suppose a king should offer a great reward to any one of his subjects, who should solve a certain problem in mathematicks. Suppose a mathematical professor in one of his universities, should be guilty of high treason, and condemned to die. Suppose the evening next before the day appointed for his execution, he should solve the king's problem; would he not, in that case, be entitled to the king's reward? But how can he be rewarded for his discovery, when he must die for his treason? There is but one way supposable, and that is, the king's granting him a full pardon. Let this be done, and he stands as fair to be rewarded, as if he had never offended. Just so, the holy and virtuous actions of believers are as amiable and worthy of the divine approbation, as if they had never sinned; yet they cannot be rewarded, unless they are forgiven. But after God justifies, or forgives them, on Christ's account, they stand as fair to be rewarded for all their good deeds, as if they had never sinned and forfeited the divine favour. Thus there appears to be a perfect consistency between God's justifying, that is, forgiving believers for Christ's sake, and yet rewarding them, for their own sake, according to their works.

4. If all that God bestows upon men, for Christ's sake, is forgiveness; then there is no propriety in directing sinners to go to Christ for a new heart or sanctifying grace. Christ did not die for sinners, to procure their regeneration; but to procure their pardon or justification, after they are regenerated. God grants regenerating grace to whom he pleases, as an act of

mere sovereignty, without any particular respect to the death or atonement of Christ. Sinners must be renewed, before they can believe in Christ, or partake of any benefit on his account. It is, therefore, contrary to the whole economy of redemption, to direct sinners to go to Christ for regenerating or sanctifying grace. But how often are they directed to go to Christ, and carry their unholy hearts to be sanctified, their hard hearts to be softened, their stony hearts to be taken away. This is a mode of preaching very different from that of the apostles. They preached through Christ the forgiveness of sins, not the renovation of the heart. They exhorted sinners to repent and believe, that their sins might be blotted out. There is a great propriety in directing sinners to go penitently and believingly to Christ for pardoning mercy, through whom alone they can obtain forgiveness in the sight of God. But there is a gross absurdity in directing them to go to Christ impenitently and unbelievingly, for faith and repentance. For the very meaning of going to Christ is loving, believing, or trusting in him; which cannot be done with an unholy and totally corrupt heart. This mode of preaching has a direct tendency to give sinners a wrong idea of themselves, and of the atonement of Christ, and of consequence, to destroy their souls forever.

5. If the only thing which God bestows upon sinners for Christ's sake is forgiveness; then we may easily determine what it is, that ministers have a right to offer to them in Christ's name. Some say, that ministers have no right to make any offer to sinners in Christ's name, because an offer made to them would imply a condition to be performed on their part, which would be inconsistent with the very spirit and grace of the gospel. Others say, that ministers have a right to

offer sinners a new heart, or regenerating grace, upon the condition of their asking for it in the name of Christ. Neither of these opinions is agreeable to the leading sentiment in this discourse. The truth is, ministers have a right to make an offer to all in Christ's name, of that, and only of that, which God is ready to bestow upon them for Christ's sake: and that we have seen is pardoning mercy. God is willing to pardon, forgive, or justify all penitent believing sinners, on Christ's account. It is, therefore, the indispensable duty of ministers to offer the pardoning mercy of God to all, who will believe in Christ, or cordially embrace the gospel. When Paul preached the gospel, he made this, and only this offer, to his hearers. "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."

Finally, we may infer from the whole tenor of this discourse, that no sinners under the light of the gospel, have any ground to despair of finding pardon and acceptance in the sight of God, on account of the greatness of their guilt. When sinners become acquainted with their own hearts, and the nature, number, and aggravations of their sins, they are apt to think that their guilt is too great to be forgiven. But since Christ has made a complete atonement for the sins of the whole world; and since God freely offers pardon to all without distinction, who repent and believe the gospel, there is nothing but impenitence and unbelief, that can shut them out of the kingdom of heaven. They are not to expect forgiveness for their own sake, but for Christ's sake; and for Christ's sake, God is as ready to forgive the greatest, as the smallest sinner. Indeed, the greatness of guilt in the truly penitent and humble, is a ground of hope, rather than a reason of despair. So David thought and said. "For thy name's sake,

O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." Where sin abounds, there grace can much more abound. It is in vain for sinners to go about to establish their own righteousness, and to depend upon their own worthiness to recommend them to the divine favour. They must become penitent and broken hearted for sin, before they can be willing to be pardoned merely for Christ's sake. As soon as the publican sincerely cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" he went down to his house justified, pardoned, and accepted. As soon as the prodigal son repented and asked his father's forgiveness, his Father freely forgave him all his offences. These instances were designed to convince all penitent sinners of God's readiness to forgive them upon the terms of the gospel. Be it known, therefore, to all sinners, without exception, that through Christ is preached unto them the forgiveness of sins; and if they will only confess and forsake their transgressions, they shall certainly find favour in the sight of God. Amen.

[illegible]

See the council of Trent its decrees & there you will find the doctrine of Dr Em—
The head of the [illegible]

SERMON XIV.

THE NECESSITY OF ZEAL IN MAINTAINING DIVINE INSTITUTIONS.

JOHN ii, 17.

And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

THE occasion, which led the disciples of Christ to recollect and quote this passage from the sixty-ninth Psalm, was a bold and astonishing act of duty, which they saw him perform in the temple at Jerusalem. When he came to that city to attend the passover, which he never failed to attend at the proper time, "He found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandize." This was a surprizing act of zeal for the glory of God and the sanctity of divine institutions. The temple had been solemnly separated from a common to a sacred use, and consecrated to the peculiar service of God. No common or secular business ought to have been done in this sacred house; but some of the professed people of God had become so corrupt and presumptuous, as to buy and sell in it, even in the presence of the priests, whose sacred office required them to maintain the purity of holy places and of holy things. But though they neglected their duty, yet Christ determined to

maintain the honour of his Father's house and the purity of his instituted worship. Having made a scourge of small cords, he boldly went into the temple, where he not only drove out the sheep and oxen, but the buyers and sellers, whom he reproved with so much authority and solemnity, that they lost all power to reply or to resist. "It is written, said he, My house shall be called a house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." This extraordinary act of purging the temple, demonstrated his holy and ardent zeal to maintain all the positive precepts and institutions of his Father's house; and at the same time exhibited a bright example, which all his followers ought to imitate. They ought to maintain pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God has appointed in his word. To explain and enforce the duty of christians, to be zealous in maintaining the positive duties of religion, it will be necessary,

I. To mention some of the positive duties of religion under the gospel.

II. To point out the distinction between positive and moral duties.

III. To consider how christians may maintain positive duties. And,

IV. To show why they should be zealous in maintaining these duties.

I. I am to mention some of the positive duties of religion under the gospel.

The duties of this kind were much more numerous under the legal, than they are under the gospel dispensation. Under the law, the times and places of publick worship, together with a multitude of sacrifices, purifications, rites, and ceremonies, were positively appointed. But all these positive duties, which the laws of Moses enjoined, are now superseded and abolished,

by the christian dispensation. It is not easy, however, to determine how far some positive duties, which were given before the law and under the law, are still binding upon christians. But since there is no occasion, in this discourse, to consider any such doubtful cases, I will mention only some of the plain and principal positive duties, which are enjoined in the New Testament.

Here the first duty to be mentioned is the observation of the Sabbath, or the keeping of one day in seven as holy time. Our Saviour not only observed the Sabbath himself, but declared, that "the Sabbath was made for man," plainly intimating its perpetual obligation upon all men in the present life. With this duty the publick and social worship of God is intimately connected. Christ attended the duties of the sanctuary on the Sabbath, and undoubtedly commanded his apostles, and through them all his followers, to keep the first, instead of the seventh day of the week, as a day of sacred rest and publick worship. Accordingly we know his apostles, and his followers in general, have ever since his ascension, attended publick worship on the first day of the week, which is emphatically styled the Lord's day. Christ expressly required his friends to profess his religion before the world; which is a duty binding upon all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Christ commanded, that those who professed his religion publickly, should be baptized with water in the name of the sacred Trinity. Christ enjoined it upon his professed and baptized friends, to partake of bread and wine in commemoration of his death. And he moreover instituted a standing visible church, to be composed of such visible believers as can conveniently meet together in one place, to hear the gospel, observe its ordinances, and

to exercise that mutual watch and discipline over one another, which tends to promote their purity, peace, and edification. To sum up the whole in a word: to keep the Sabbath, to worship God in publick, to make a publick profession of religion, to be baptized, to commemorate the death of Christ, to form into a church or religious society, and to exercise a proper watch and discipline over one another, are the principal positive duties enjoined upon christians under the gospel dispensation.

II. The next thing proposed is, to point out the difference between positive and moral duties.

Though we may properly divide all duties into moral and positive; yet we ought not to magnify this distinction beyond reasonable bounds. It is often said, that moral duties are founded in the nature of things, and that they differ from positive duties principally in this respect. That there is a reason in the nature of things for moral duties, prior to their being commanded of God, is readily granted. But it is equally true, that there is a reason in the relation of things for all positive duties, prior to the divine precept which enjoins them. There is, indeed, some difference between the nature of things, and the relation of things. The relation of things is mutable, and the nature of things is immutable. But there may be as good a reason for a positive duty, arising from the relation of things, as for a moral duty, arising from the nature of things. As God is a being perfectly wise and holy, so he can no more act without reason, than he can act contrary to reason. He always sees a reason for every thing he does, before he acts; and he always sees a reason for every thing he requires, before he commands.

This holds equally true in regard to both moral and positive precepts. He requires moral duties, be-

cause he sees a good reason for them in the nature of things; and he requires positive duties, because he sees a good reason for them in the relation of things. He required his people of old to love him with all the heart, because he saw a good reason for it in the nature of things; and he required the same people to offer sacrifices, because he saw as good a reason for it in the then relation of things. God never acts capriciously or arbitrarily, from mere will or pleasure; but his will or pleasure in all his commands is founded in a solid reason, arising either from the nature of things, or from the relation of things, which renders his will or pleasure perfectly wise and good.

The proper distinction, therefore, between moral and positive duties is this: moral duties are founded in reasons, which we are able to discover by the mere light of nature; but positive duties are founded in reasons, which we cannot discover without the aid of divine revelation. This may be illustrated by a contrast between these two species of duties. The light of nature teaches us, that we ought to love God, but it does not teach us, that we ought to rest one day in seven from all worldly employments. The light of nature teaches us, that we ought to worship God; but it does not teach us, that we ought to worship him in a publick and social manner. The light of nature teaches us, that we ought to obey God; but it does not teach us, that we ought to bind ourselves to obey him, by publickly and solemnly engaging to obey him. The light of nature teaches us, that we ought to fulfil our engagements to God; but it does not teach us, that we ought to ratify our engagements by the rite of Baptism. The light of nature teaches us, that we ought to love One, who has died to save us; but it does not teach us, that we ought to commemorate his love, by

partaking of bread and wine in remembrance of him. In a word, the light of nature may teach us every moral duty; but it cannot teach us any positive duty. This is the only distinction between moral duties and positive; and this distinction exists only in our minds, and not in the mind of God, who comprehends the relations as well as the nature of things, and who sees as good reasons for positive, as for moral duties. And could we as clearly see the relation and connexion of *all* things, as we see the nature of *some* things; we should see as good reasons for positive duties, arising from the relations of things, as we do for moral duties, arising from the nature of things, and should have no more need of a divine revelation to discover positive, than to discover moral duties. It is true, that some moral duties are more important than some positive duties; but since positive duties are founded in as much reason, and enjoined by as much authority, as moral duties, we are under no less obligation to obey all the positive, than all the moral duties required in the gospel.

This leads me to show,

III. How christians may maintain the positive duties, which the gospel enjoins upon them.

It properly belongs to professing christians to maintain all the institutions of the gospel. The great design of their being formed into distinct churches or religious societies, is to make them the salt of the earth and the light of the world. As God formerly committed his sacred oracles and positive institutions to the care and trust of the Jewish church; so he has since committed his word and ordinances to the care and trust of the Christian church. "God hath set some *in the church*, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, and diversities of tongues."

Again we read, "God gave some, apostles; some, prophets; some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." It appears from these passages, that all ecclesiastical power, as well as the word and ordinances of the gospel, are given to the church, in the first place, and lodged in their hands for their edification and spiritual benefit. And upon this principle, the apostle calls the church, "the church of the living God, the *pillar* and *ground* of the truth." The members of every christian church are bound to use all their influence, to maintain the word and worship of God and all his sacred ordinances, in their primitive purity and simplicity. Here then I would observe,

1. That one way, by which every member of the church may do something to maintain the positive duties of religion, is by his own exemplary conduct. Zacharias and Elisabeth walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. They strictly and constantly attended upon every divine institution, which had a direct tendency to maintain the honour and practice of all instituted duties. While our Saviour tabernacled in flesh, he paid a sacred regard to all divine institutions. When he went to John to be baptized, the reason he assigned was, that he must fulfil all righteousness. He considered baptism as a positive duty, which, as a Jew and a priest, he was bound to observe. Being made under the law, he meant by his practice to maintain all its positive institutions. Accordingly, he attended not only the passover, but the publick worship of God, and all the rites and ceremonies of divine appointment. This example all his professed friends ought to follow, and in

this way maintain the publick worship of God and all his holy ordinances.

The more strictly and constantly every member of the church observes the Sabbath, attends publick worship, and practises all the positive duties of religion, the more he honours and maintains the special ordinances of the gospel. Every christian may have great influence, by his pious example, to render divine institutions truly amiable and respectable in the eyes of the world. Though the neglect of moral duties is a greater reproach to the professors of religion, than the neglect of positive duties; yet the strict performance of positive duties is a greater honour to their religion, than the performance of moral duties. It is by the strict observance of positive duties, that christians distinguish themselves from the rest of mankind, who generally, for their own reputation, pay regard to the common duties of morality. Men may be very moral and reputable, without paying any respect to divine institutions; but men cannot be very religious, without paying a sacred regard to all the positive duties of christianity. The very first step, therefore, which every member of the church should take, in order to maintain the honour and purity of divine institutions, is to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, which will give weight to every thing else he may be called to say or do to promote the same end.

2. The members of the church ought to cultivate mutual love and watchfulness, in order to preserve divine ordinances in their purity. They are mutually bound to love as brethren, and to promote each other's spiritual good. As members of the same body, they have engaged to meet together in the same place, to join in the same duties, and to unite in the same

christian communion and fellowship. This gives them peculiar opportunities of exercising all the offices of brotherly love and watchfulness. Brotherly love will produce that brotherly care and watchfulness, which the word of God requires. It is written, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." The apostle also gives a similar admonition to christians. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." If errors and deviations from the path of duty were seasonably checked and reproved, many great evils might be prevented from coming into and corrupting the church. Christian watchfulness has a direct tendency to prevent the spread of religious errors and corruptions among any church or religious society. This method Christ took to purge the temple. He sharply rebuked those, who presumed to profane his Father's house, and pour contempt upon sacred things. His rebukes carried conviction and produced the desired effect. It becomes the members of every church to be equally watchful and faithful. If they observe any of their brethren going astray, in respect to sentiment or practice, they ought to take the first proper opportunity to converse with them in the spirit of love and tenderness, and faithfully warn them of their danger, and exhort them to reformation and repentance. The apostle suggests a most powerful motive to induce christians to exercise such faithfulness towards each other. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the

error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." I must add,

3. The professors of religion ought to unite in the exercise of that holy discipline, which Christ has appointed for the express purpose of reforming transgressors, or excluding them from the church. This mode of discipline we find enjoined upon christians in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew. Though different denominations of christians have adopted different modes of church discipline; yet they have all agreed, that some mode of discipline ought to be maintained and exercised. But as this is a duty, which requires peculiar tenderness, fidelity, and self-denial, churches in general have, from age to age, been too negligent in keeping up a proper care and watchfulness and authority over their delinquent members, which has opened the door to innumerable errors in doctrine and practice. The apostles exhorted christians to be very faithful in maintaining a strict discipline over their brethren, who transgressed the laws of Christ, and violated their own covenant-obligations. And when they were faithful in this respect, their fidelity was crowned with success. This appears from the good effect of christian discipline in the church of Corinth in particular. Let any church properly exercise that discipline over their members, which Christ has appointed, and they will have great reason to hope, that they shall be able to prevent or purge out every essential error in doctrine and practice, and carry conviction to all around them of their own sincerity, and of the beauty and importance of true religion. It now remains to show,

IV. Why christians should be zealous in maintaining the purity and simplicity of divine institutions.

Zeal always has respect to some external action, and not to any mere immanent exercise of the mind. We may properly say, that a man pursues an object zealously; but we cannot properly say, that he zealously loves or hates that object. But no man ever pursues an object zealously, unless it appears to him to be an object not only very desirable, but very important, or difficult, to obtain. One duty, therefore, may require the exercise of zeal and not another. Though Christ always paid perfect obedience to his Father's will, yet he did not exercise zeal in the performance of every duty. He often conversed and acted with great calmness and serenity, without the least appearance of zeal; but he never failed to exercise a holy and fervent zeal, whenever some difficult and important duty was to be performed. It is now natural to inquire, why christians should be more zealous in maintaining divine institutions, than in discharging many other religious duties.

1. They ought to be zealous in performing this duty, because it is extremely difficult to perform. Those who abuse or profane divine ordinances are averse from being rebuked and restrained, and scarcely ever fail of resenting and opposing any thing that is said or done to rebuke and restrain them. Solomon observes, that "he that reproveth a scorner, getteth to himself shame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man, getteth to himself a blot." Christ was hated, reproached, and opposed, because he testified of the world, that their works were evil. The same spirit still reigns in the breasts of transgressors. They will manifest their resentment and opposition towards all, who attempt to rebuke or restrain them. To meet and overcome this great and formidable difficulty, requires peculiar zeal in the professors of religion. It was owing to a

want of zeal in the Jewish priests, that they were afraid to rebuke and restrain those who profaned the house of God. Nor can it be owing to any thing but the want of holy zeal in the followers of Christ, that so many corrupt doctrines and corrupt practices have been suffered to creep in and prevail among the once pure and flourishing churches in this land. But such a pure and fervent zeal as glowed in the breast of Christ, will embolden his true followers to stem the torrent of error and corruption, and maintain the purity of divine ordinances in the face of the boldest corrupters. True zeal takes away that fear of man, which bringeth a snare, and enables christians to triumph over all opposition in the path of duty. How extremely difficult was it to purify the Jewish church, after it had been corrupted by idolatrous priests and princes? But how often did the zeal of pious priests and princes bear down all opposition, and bring back the deluded and corrupted to the true worship of the true God? Nothing but a pure and fervent zeal ever did, or ever will prompt the friends of God to surmount the great and formidable difficulties, which lie in the way of maintaining the worship and ordinances of God pure and entire. But,

2. The importance as well as the difficulty of preserving the purity of divine institutions, ought to inspire christians with peculiar zeal in faithfully discharging this duty. Though the instituted forms of religion may be maintained, without maintaining religion itself; yet religion itself cannot be maintained, without maintaining its instituted forms. These are the bulwarks of religion, which its enemies never fail to attack, in order to bring it into neglect and contempt. The enemies of the Jewish church gained their greatest advantage against it, by attacking its sacred rites

and ceremonies: and those who have corrupted christian institutions, have done the greatest injury to the christian church. Christ has been most deeply wounded in the house of his friends, who have either neglected, perverted, or corrupted his holy ordinances. False professors of religion were the principal instruments of introducing those errors and corruptions in the seven churches of Asia, which finally destroyed them. By persons of the same character and disposition, were all the idolatry, errors, and superstition of the church of Rome introduced, which have defaced christianity, and spread infidelity through the christian world. The whole history of the church of God teaches us, that if we suffer the Sabbath, the sacraments, and the positive duties of religion to be neglected, perverted, or corrupted, we shall certainly find, that christianity will die in our hands. This is a solemn consideration, which ought to awaken the warmest zeal in the breasts all sincere christians, to maintain the purity of all divine institutions, upon which the very existence of religion depends. Zeal in pursuing any object, ought to rise in proportion to the importance of the object pursued. There is no duty, therefore, in which christians ought to exercise a more enlightened and ardent zeal, than in maintaining those special ordinances of the gospel, which are absolutely necessary to promote the cause, and enlarge the kingdom of Christ.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If positive duties, which cannot be discovered by the light of nature, are founded in as much reason as moral duties; then we may justly conclude, that a divine Revelation has always been necessary. This is denied by infidels, who maintain, that the light of nature is sufficient to teach moral agents all moral duties,

which are founded in reason, and which they can be bound to perform. They say, if God should command his creatures to do any thing, which is not founded in reason, and which they could not discover by the proper use of their rational powers, his positive command would not lay them under moral obligation to obey; because his positive command could not make that right which was not right before, nor that duty which was not duty before. So that the very supposition of his giving his creatures a revelation, which contains positive precepts, is palpably absurd, being altogether unnecessary and useless. The whole plausibility of this mode of reasoning arises from a great mistake, which is, that there can be no reasons for any divine command, which are not discoverable by the light of nature. But it appears from what has been said, that there always are as good reasons for positive, as for moral duties; and therefore God may, with equal propriety and authority, enjoin both upon any of his intelligent creatures, who stand in need of a divine revelation to teach them positive duties in particular, which they cannot discover by their mere intellectual powers. Adam, in his primitive state of innocence, stood in need of a divine revelation, to teach him what fruits of the earth he might use for food; what business he might pursue; what day he might rest from labour, and how he might spend that day of rest. These were positive duties, which he could not discover by the light of nature, and which he needed a divine revelation to teach him. After he sinned and incurred the divine displeasure, he stood in greater need of a further revelation, to teach him how he might escape deserved punishment and obtain the forfeited favour of his offended Sovereign. His posterity likewise have stood in need of the same revelation.

As the gospel was not founded in the nature, but in the relation of things, so it could not be discovered by the light of nature. God, indeed, saw good reasons in the relation of things to provide an atonement for the sins of the world, and to appoint those positive duties, which are necessary for men to perform in order to obtain salvation through the atonement provided. There are now just as good reasons for all the positive duties of the gospel as for the gospel itself; and just as good reasons for a divine revelation as for these positive duties. And since a new relation or order of things has arisen in consequence of the plan of redemption, God has revealed new positive duties to the angels of light. He has commanded them to worship Christ as Mediator, to attend Christ in his mediatorial work, and to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. These are duties, which angels could no more discover by the light of nature than Adam could discover the duty of offering sacrifices by the light of nature. But all such positive duties of angels and men are founded in as good reasons as any moral duties whatever. Hence it appears, that all intelligent creatures stand in need of a divine revelation, to teach them those positive duties, which they could not possibly discover without it.

2. If positive duties are founded in as good reasons as moral duties, then no universal rule can be given to determine which ought to give way to the other, when they come in competition. It seems to be a general opinion, that positive duties ought always to give way to moral, when the one or the other must be omitted. And those who maintain this opinion, lay great weight upon what our Saviour said upon this point. It is true, he said some things, which seem to give the preference to moral duties, and to intimate that they ought generally to be performed, when positive duties come

in competition. When the Pharisees blamed him for eating with publicans and sinners, he replied, "Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." This seems to intimate, that he considered seeking the spiritual good of sinners as a moral duty, which ought to be performed in preference to a positive duty. He suggested the same idea in answer to the Pharisees on another occasion, when they complained of his disciples for plucking and eating ears of corn on the sabbath. He first mentioned the case of David in eating the shew bread, and then the conduct of the priests in labouring on the sabbath in performing their official duty, and finally justifies them all, by repeating the text, which he had once before cited. "If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." He moreover blamed the Scribes and Pharisees for paying tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and omitting the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. But why did Christ give this preference to moral duties? It could not be because they were founded in better reasons than positive duties, and on that account of higher obligation. For we have shown, that positive duties are founded in as good reasons, and enjoined by as good authority, as moral duties. Christ knew, that the Jews paid more regard to positive rites and ceremonies and even human traditions, than to moral injunctions, and he meant to reprove them for their superstition and hypocrisy; but not to weaken their obligation to perform positive duties. Accordingly he adds, "These (moral duties) ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Since then positive duties are as well founded and as expressly commanded as moral duties, they are absolutely equal in point of obligation

and, therefore, the only proper way to determine which ought to give way to the other is, to determine which, at the present time, is of most necessity or importance to be done. When moral duties come in competition with each other, the more important must be done, and the less important deferred. Prayer is a moral duty; but a man ought to defer that duty, if his neighbour's house is on fire and requires his immediate attendance. The circumcising of a child on the eighth day was a positive duty under the law, and the necessity of the case required it to be done at that particular time, in preference to a moral duty. The truth is, sometimes one moral duty ought to give way to another moral duty; sometimes one positive duty ought to give way to another positive duty; sometimes one positive duty ought to give way to another moral duty; and sometimes one moral duty ought to give way to another positive duty. This point cannot be determined by any universal rule, but must be left to the decision of every one's conscience, according to the circumstances of the present time.

3. If christians ought to be zealous in maintaining the positive duties and institutions of the gospel; then all who have experienced a saving change are under indispensable obligations to profess religion and attend divine ordinances. There are many, in almost all our congregations, who think they have passed from death unto life and cordially embraced the Saviour, that live in the neglect of naming his name, and of attending the sacraments which he has appointed. Though they mean to perform every moral duty, and dare not neglect the reading and the hearing of the word of God, nor the duty of calling upon his name; yet they imagine they may safely and excusably live in neglect of baptism and the Lord's supper. But in this

they are greatly deceived. Christ requires them not only to believe his gospel, but to profess his name before the world. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Again he says, "He that believeth and is *baptized* shall be *saved;* but he that believeth not shall be *damned.*" It is extremely difficult to see how any, who allowedly live in the neglect of professing religion, and of observing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, can justly entertain a hope of salvation, any more than those, who live in the neglect of faith, repentance, or prayer. It is true, the mere professing of religion, and the attending upon the sacraments are mere positive duties; but they are founded in reason and commanded by divine authority, which gives them all the weight and obligation of moral duties. And it is presumed, that none have a right to think or say, that men are more excusable for neglecting positive duties, than those which are strictly moral. No doubt men may be saved, though they should neglect, for a while, some moral duties, and so they undoubtedly may, though they should neglect for a while, some positive duties; but still they would be highly criminal for their neglect in either, or both cases. And their criminality would certainly weaken, if not destroy their hopes of pardon and acceptance in the sight of God. This ought to alarm all those who are dreaming, that they are the friends of Christ and walking in the path to heaven, while they are afraid or ashamed to do whatsoever he has commanded them.

4. If christians should be zealous to maintain the purity of divine institutions; then they should be very strict and faithful in admitting none into their holy

fellowship, but such as appear, in a judgment of charity, to be sincere friends to Christ. None but such are truly worthy to come to the table of the Lord, and commemorate his dying love. He does not allow any to come to his holy supper, who are not clothed with the wedding garment, or possessed of saving grace. And though christians cannot look into the hearts of proponents to communion; yet they can and ought to judge of their piety by their fruits. Christ has drawn the characters of his true disciples, and they should admit none to unite with them in his holy ordinances, who are destitute of those visible signs of saving grace. It is their indispensable duty to require a credible profession of real holiness of those, whom they admit as members of their body. They have no right to lower the terms of communion, in condescension to any who may desire to come unprepared. And a proper zeal for the honour of Christ, and for the peace and purity of the church, will constrain them to be strict in examining the characters and qualifications of those whom they receive to communion. This is the first and most effectual method they can take to promote the purity, and prevent the corruption of the church. It is much easier to keep corrupt persons out of the church, than to prevent their doing mischief after they are once in it. "A little leaven, says the Apostle in this case, will leaven the whole lump." It is while men sleep, that the enemy sows tares. It is while christians grow careless and unfaithful, that bad men creep into the church, and corrupt it. Every minister and private brother, therefore, ought to exercise a peculiar zeal, fidelity, and vigilance, in admitting members into the church, in order to maintain, if possible, all the doctrines, duties, and institutions of the gospel pure and uncorrupt.

5. If christians ought to be zealous in maintaining the purity of divine institutions; then they are responsible for the errors and corruptions, which spring up and prevail in the churches to which they belong. It is generally owing to some fault in them, that unworthy members gain admission into the church; and it must always be their fault, if they do not either reclaim or exclude them, after they become visibly erroneous or corrupt. Christ has clearly pointed out their duty in respect to preserving the purity of his sacred institutions; and if they neglect to perform it, they stand justly responsible for the evil consequences of their neglect. How severely did the apostle reprove the church of Corinth for neglecting to discipline the incestuous person? And how much more sharply did Christ rebuke the seven churches of Asia for their unfaithfulness towards the erroneous and corrupt members, who were bringing reproach and ruin upon them? Christ still walks in the midst of his golden candlesticks, and observes the conduct of his churches. They will have a solemn account to give, if they suffer religion to languish in their hands, and the table of the Lord to become contemptible, by their negligence and unfaithfulness. It highly concerns all the professors of religion at the present day of deep declension, to become more watchful, and to strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die.

6. If christians ought to be zealous in maintaining the purity of divine institutions, then it is a mark of real sincerity in those, who actually manifest such a zeal. It is found by observation and experience, that few, if any, who are strict and conscientious in the exercise of church discipline, escape the displeasure and reproach of not only those whom they censure, but even of all who are inwardly enemies to the cause of

Christ. These persons are ready to put the worst construction upon the views and conduct of faithful christians, who are active and zealous, in watching over, reproving, and censuring the erroneous, corrupt, or disorderly. They will, if they can, make themselves and others believe, that this is a false zeal, which ought to be hated and condemned. But the sincere friends of Christ, who express their zeal for his glory and the purity of his sacred ordinances, deserve universal approbation and esteem, instead of reproach and contempt. A zeal according to knowledge in the exercise of church discipline is one of the most rare and amiable traits in the christian character. It is a signal expression of true self-denial, to take up the cross, and suffer reproach for the cause of Christ, and for the saving benefit of those, who are wandering in the paths of fatal error and delusion. Christians never act more in character, and give better evidence of the sincerity of their hearts, than while they are displaying a fervent zeal to purge out errors and corruptions from the church of Christ.

7. If christians should be zealous in maintaining gospel discipline; then those who are the subjects of it, ought to be unfeignedly thankful to their brethren for their labour of love. It is in them an expression of pure self-denial to pursue the steps which Christ has appointed to reclaim offenders, who are injuring themselves, their best friends, and the cause which they have solemnly engaged to promote. And if they are true penitents, they will hear the friendly admonition of their brethren, confess their offences, and heal, as far as possible, the wounds which they have given to Christ in the house of his friends. Instead of complaining of the zeal and fidelity of their fellow christians, they will return them their grateful acknowledg-

ments for their benevolent exertions to save them from the path of the destroyer. This will give the most satisfaction to their own minds, and be the best method they can take to regain the charity and confidence of the church, who will rejoice to see the happy issue of their fidelity and zeal. But if they are obstinate and incorrigible under the mild means of gospel discipline, they will throw themselves into the power of the great adversary of souls, and take the direct course to ruin themselves forever.

To conclude; let the professors of religion be urged to fulfil the important trusts reposed in them. Christ has given them the charge of his word, of his ordinances, and of the discipline of his house. He still walks in the midst of his golden candlesticks, and keeps his eye fixed upon his professed friends, to see whether they are faithful to him, to themselves, and to one another. He has given them power and opportunity of doing much for him, and bound them not only by his authority, but by his love, to be faithful and zealous in his cause. They have put their hand to the plough, and must never look back. It will be highly displeasing to Christ, and extremely injurious to the souls of men, if they suffer corruptions in doctrine, and practice to prevail, and let christianity languish and die in their hands. But if they are constant, faithful, and zealous in promoting piety, and maintaining the purity of divine ordinances, they will meet the final approbation of Christ, and a glorious recompense of reward. Amen.

SERMON XV.

SELFISHNESS THE ESSENCE OF MORAL DEPRAVITY.

LUKE vi, 32.

For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

WHEN Christ first appeared in his publick character he displayed so much kindness, compassion, and benevolence in healing the sick, relieving the distressed, and preaching the gospel to the poor, that he was almost universally beloved as well as admired. The high and low, the learned and unlearned, the teachers and those that were taught, flocked after him, to hear his doctrines, and to see and experience his miracles. He appeared to be what it was foretold that he should be, "the desire of all nations." At least, the Scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees, though disunited among themselves, agreed to admire and to follow the long expected Messiah. And to any one, less acquainted with the human heart than Christ was, they would have appeared to be his real friends. But he knew what was in man, and was never deceived by any false appearances of love and esteem. As he perfectly knew the characters of all who followed him, so in his addresses to the mixed multitudes, he directed his discourses to the hearts and consciences of both the sincere and insincere. And as he had occasion, while his real enemies wore the mask of love, to point out the distinction between true love and false, so he dwelt much upon this subject in both his publick and

private discourses. An instance of this we have in the context, where we find a description of his followers, and a summary of his discourse, which he delivered to them. "He came down and stood in the plain; and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; and that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for behold your reward is great in heaven." He now turns from his disciples to the multitude, and says, "But wo unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Wo unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Wo unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Wo unto you when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets. But I say unto you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every one that asketh of thee, and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye to them like-

wise. *For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.*" What could have been more pertinent than this discourse to the multitudes, who united with his disciples in following him, and who practically expressed so much regard for him? It was suited to make them all see and feel that essential distinction, which there is between true love and false, and between saints and sinners. He first describes that pure, disinterested love, which forms the character of saints, and then contrasts it with that selfishness, which forms the character of sinners; and finally appeals to sinners themselves, whether they deserve the character of saints, while they love only those that love them. There is now, perhaps, as much need as ever there was, to set this subject in a just and intelligible light. And in order to this, it is proposed to consider why sinners love themselves; why they love others; and why there is no moral goodness in their loving themselves and others.

1. Let us consider why sinners love themselves. It is plainly supposed in the text, that sinners love themselves, for they are said to love those that love them, which could not be accounted for, if they were wholly destitute of love to themselves. In other passages of scripture, they are said to be lovers of their ownselves, and to seek their own things, and not the things of others. But this is too evident from experience and observation to need any proof. Sinners certainly love themselves. But why? Not for the same reason that saints love themselves: if they did, they would be saints. Nor do they love themselves from mere instinct, as the lower species of animals do. But they love themselves because they are themselves, which is neither true love, nor a mere animal affection, but

proper selfishness. Pleasant and painful sensations are common to saints and sinners, and to all sensitive natures, and have no moral quality belonging to them. Every creature, perhaps whether rational or irrational, takes pleasure in receiving its proper food; but this love to its food is not love to itself, or selfishness. The saint and the sinner may equally love honey, because it is agreeable to the taste; but this love to honey is neither interested, nor disinterested love, and of course is neither virtuous nor vicious. Men never love any particular food from a moral motive, but from the constitution of their nature, in which they are passive, and have no active concern. The case is different in loving themselves. In this they properly act, and act from a moral motive. Sinners love themselves not because they are a part of the intellectual system, nor because the general good requires them to regard their personal happiness, but because they are themselves. They love their own interest because it is their own, in distinction from the interest of all other created, or uncreated beings. This is a free, voluntary exercise, which is contrary to their reason and conscience, and which they know to be in its own nature wrong. Their interest is really no more valuable for being theirs, than if it belonged to others; and they themselves areno more valuable, than other creatures of the same character and capacity. To love themselves, therefore, because they are themselves, is to love themselves from a motive peculiar to selfish creatures.

II. We are to consider why sinners love others. Our Saviour said to his disciples, that if they were of the world, the world would love them. And he said in the text, that sinners love those that love them. Though the love of sinners always centres in them-

selves, yet it may extend to others, and take in a large circle of mankind, and even God himself. Sinners loved Christ, and cried hosannah, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. The whole people of Israel loved the God of Moses, when he carried them through the red sea, delivered them from the hand of Pharaoh, and gave them manna from heaven. But the question before us is, Why do such selfish creatures love others? The answer is easy. It is because they have received, or expect to receive benefit from them. This is the reason our Lord assigns. "If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again." For the same reason that sinners love themselves, they naturally love those that love them, and are disposed to do them good. As they love their own interest, because it is their own, so they love every person or object, which serves to increase or preserve their own interest. They do not value and love others, because they are valuable and worthy to be loved; but merely because they view them as means or instruments of securing or advancing their own personal happiness. They value their fellow men, for the same reason that they value their own houses and lands, flocks and herds. They love these, not on their own account, but because they serve their selfish purposes. So they love their fellow men, not on their own account, but because they deem them some way or other subservient to their private, separate interest.

III. It remains to inquire, why there is no moral goodness in the love, which sinners exercise towards

themselves and others. Christ supposes, that they all know the nature of their love, and that there is nothing virtuous or praise-worthy in it. "If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? If ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive as much again; what thank have ye?" Is there any thing truly virtuous and amiable, in men's loving themselves, or in loving others, from mere selfish, mercenary motives? All men in the world know, that there is no moral goodness in such selfish affections; and they are always unwilling to acknowledge that they are actuated by mercenary motives. Who is willing to allow, that he loves himself merely because he is himself? Or that he loves others merely because they love him? Or that he never does good to others, only when he thinks it will be for his private advantage? Who in publick life is willing to avow, that he is not seeking the publick good, but only his private interest? Who is willing to own, that he has ever given or taken a bribe? Who is willing to be seen in doing any act of selfishness? Who ever thanked another for doing him a benefit, only for the sake of gaining a much greater benefit? We never thank men for loving themselves, nor for loving us merely for their own sake. It is the unanimous sentiment of mankind, that there is no virtue in that love, which flows entirely from mercenary motives. But why? This is the point now to be illustrated. Here then I would observe,

1. That there is no moral goodness in the love which sinners feel and express, because it is not a conformity to that love, which God feels and expresses. He is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. He seeks not only his own glory, but the real good of others. Christ, therefore, sets him up as the

standard of perfection, and commands them to conform to him, who loves those that hate him, and does good to his most inveterate enemies. "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." There is no conformity in the love of sinners to the love of God. His love is virtuous and excellent, because it terminates upon all proper objects; but there is no moral beauty or excellence in their love, because it wholly terminates upon an improper object, that is, their own selfish interest. God does not love them exclusively, and merely because they are themselves, but because he regards the good of every creature according to its worth. This is a holy and disinterested love; but when sinners love themselves, because they are themselves, and love others, because they are beneficial to them, there is no moral virtue or excellence in it. It bears no conformity to the love of God, which is the standard of all moral perfection.

2. The selfish love of sinners has no moral goodness in it, because it is no obedience to the divine law. This law requires them to love God with all the heart, and to love their fellow men as themselves. But when they love themselves because they are themselves, and love others only because they have received, or expect to receive benefit from them, do they obey the divine law? Do they feel towards God, as they would that he should feel towards them? Or do they feel towards others, as they would that others should feel towards them? Does their selfish affection in the least degree anwer the demands of that law, which requires pure, disinterested love? It is morally

impossible for sinners to love God supremely, and their fellow men impartially, from a selfish heart: Let their love to God or man rise ever so high, it can have no moral goodness in it, because it is no obedience to the divine law, which requires nothing but pure, holy, disinterested love.

3. There is no moral goodness in the selfishness of sinners, because it is the very essence of all moral evil. All the wickedness of Satan consists in his selfishness. He loves himself because he is himself, and loves only those who love him, because their love serves to promote what he considers as his cause and interest. He desires to bring God and all his intelligent creatures into subjection to himself, and of course hates, and opposes, and endeavours to destroy all who stand in his way, and obstruct his malignant designs. He knows by his own feelings, that selfishness will hate God and oppose all good. Accordingly, when he accused Job of selfishness, he said that he would rise in enmity against God, and blaspheme his name, if he should only touch his selfish interest. "And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the works of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." Had Job been totally selfish, Satan's prediction would have been fulfilled, and he would have hated, and if he dared, would have blasphemed God, when he stripped him of all that he had given him. Our Saviour represented selfishness in the same light. He told such as followed him from mercenary motives, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." And he told certain persons who had

professed to love him, and believe in him, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." And the apostle Paul in his epistle to Timothy represents selfishness in the most odious light. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be *lovers of their own-selves,* covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false-accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." There is no evil affection, and no evil conduct but what selfishness will, under certain circumstances, produce. It is the directly opposite affection to true benevolence, and therefore the root of all moral evil. It is the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. It seeks a personal interest, which is diametrically opposite to the glory of God, and the general interest of his kingdom. It opposes the good of sinners themselves, and makes them, as the apostle says, "hateful, and hating one another." It tends to spread misery and destruction through the universe. It makes creatures as bad as they can be, and would destroy them all, were it not for the power and wisdom and goodness of God, which are employed in restraining, directing, and overruling its pernicious influence. Though sinners may love those which love them, and do good to those that do good to them, yet the nature of their feelings and conduct is still the same. Their apparent goodness is the essence of moral evil. Their partial love is general malevolence, and their best deeds are an abomination to the Lord. All their affections and exertions terminate in themselves, whom they value and regard more than all other beings put together,

and whose interest they would sacrifice to promote their own. And can there be any thing virtuous, or amiable, or praise-worthy in such a totally selfish love, which is disconformity to God, disobedience to his law, and, in its nature and tendency, destructive of all the good of his holy kingdom?

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If sinners may love themselves and others from mere selfish motives; then it is easy to account for all their kind and friendly conduct towards their fellow creatures, consistently with their total depravity. Their selfishness naturally prompts them to do any thing, which they think will turn to their own personal advantage. To gain friends, they will show themselves friendly. To gain the love, esteem, and confidence of others, they will do acts of kindness, compassion, and even liberality. And the most depraved and selfish creature in the universe would do the same things, to obtain the same selfish ends. Satan always acts from this motive, when he transforms himself into an angel of light, and appears to seek the good of others. When he tempted our first parents, he professed to be more concerned to promote their knowledge and happiness, than even their Creator. When he tempted Christ to turn stones into bread, and commit himself to the divine care and protection, he appeared like a kind and friendly angel. And we have reason to believe, that he loves his infernal subjects who love him, and are heartily engaged to promote his cause and interest in this world; otherwise, as our Saviour says, his kingdom could not stand. But such things are no evidence against *his* total depravity, and therefore they are no evidence against the total depravity of sinners. Indeed, there is nothing can be said against *their* total

depravity, but what may be said, with equal plausibility against *his* total depravity. If it be said, that they love themselves; so does he. If it be said, that they love those that love them; so does he. If it be said, that they are kind and friendly to those that promote their interest; so is he. If it be said, that they do, in their conscience, approve of what is holy, just, and good in others; so does he. He approved of the holiness of Christ, when he called him, "the Holy One of God." If it be said, that they do, in their conscience, disapprove of what is selfish and sinful in others; so does he. He represented Job as selfish, and condemned him as wicked. If Satan were placed in the same situation in which sinners are now placed, he would appear as good as they: Or if they were placed in the same situation in which he is now placed, they would appear as bad as he. There is no more difficulty, therefore, in accounting for the conduct of sinners, consistently with their total depravity, than in accounting for the conduct of the devil, consistently with his total depravity. Total selfishness in Satan and in sinners will satisfactorily account for the good as well as bad appearances in both.

2. If the moral depravity of sinners consists in selfishness; then the moral depravity of Adam consisted in selfishness, and not in the mere want of holiness. Supposing he had lost his holiness at the moment he was tempted to eat of the forbidden fruit, yet his loss of holiness could not have rendered him morally depraved. All his natural powers, instincts, and appetites must have remained as innocent, *after* he lost his holiness, as *before* he lost it. There was no possibility of his becoming morally depraved, without a free, voluntary exercise of selfishness. And it appears from the account given of his first offence, that it essentially con-

sisted in loving himself supremely. He voluntarily partook of the forbidden fruit, from the motive of increasing his own knowledge and happiness, in opposition to the glory of God and the good of all his posterity. This was freely and voluntarily turning from benevolence to selfishness, which is the essence of moral depravity. He became morally depraved in the same manner, that Satan the first sinner in the universe became depraved. Satan had no corporeal instincts or appetites to tempt him to rebel against his Maker. He loved his own glory more than the glory of God, and aspired to become independent and supreme, which was the essence of selfishness, or moral depravity. The prevailing notion, that Adam became morally depraved, by the mere want of holiness, is repugnant to the very nature of moral depravity, and to every dictate of reason and scripture.

3. If sinners love themselves, because they are themselves, and love others, only because they suppose them to be subservient to their interest; then their affections are always selfish and sinful, let them rise ever so high, or extend ever so far. They often do love those who love them very ardently. But they never love such persons so ardently as they love themselves. For all their love to others flows from love to themselves, and the streams cannot rise so high as the fountain. Hence their most ardent and raised affections to others are as really selfish and sinful, as if they were ever so low and languid. Their nature is precisely the same, whether they are stronger or weaker. It is morally impossible, that their love to their friends, or to their Creator should rise so high, as to become disinterested or virtuous love. And as their affections do not become any better, by rising ever so high; so they do not become any better by extending ever so far. The

same mercenary motives, which induce them to love their intimate friends, may induce them to extend their regards to their country, and to their Saviour. Many sinners undoubtedly love their country, because the prosperity of their country tends to promote their prosperity; and some sinners love their Redeemer, because they think he loves them. Multitudes followed Christ for the sake of the loaves and the fishes, and loved him because they thought he loved them, and would promote both their temporal and eternal good. But in all these cases, the love of sinners is perfectly selfish and sinful. It is exactly of the same nature as the love of the miser to his money. Could sinners have a clear and extensive view of all created and uncreated objects, and did they love them all for the sake of their own private, personal benefit, their selfish love, instead of becoming any better, would become unspeakably worse For the guilt of their selfishness would be in exact proportion to the extent of their knowledge. If it be criminal for one person to prefer his interest to a greater interest of another; it must be more criminal to prefer his interest to the greater interest of a nation, and for the same reason, it must be unspeakably more criminal still, to prefer his interest to the whole interest of the universe. The consequence irresistibly follows, that the higher the love of sinners rises, and the further it extends, the more criminal it becomes.

4. If sinners are constantly under the governing influence of selfishness; then they must experience an essential change in their affections in order to be saved. If they naturally possessed the least degree of disinterested love or true holiness, there would be no need of a radical and essential change in their moral exercises. They might love God, and repent of sin, and believe

in Christ, without becoming new creatures. Their carnal mind, which is perfect selfishness, cannot be new modified or moulded into benevolence, by any exterior means or motives. Though under some circumstances, they may hate the world, which they once loved, and love God, whom they once hated, without a change of heart; yet their love and hatred will arise from the same mercenary motives, which are entirely sinful. Sinners are continually turning their attention and their affections from one object to another; but their love and their hatred continue to be of the same selfish nature. The careless sinner fixes his whole attention and affection upon the world; but when he is awakened from his stupidity, he turns his whole attention from the world to God, whom he hates for the same reason, that he before loved the world. Whatever sinners love and hate, they love and hate from selfish motives; and consequently no change of objects, motives, or circumstances, has the least tendency to change the nature of their affections. So that nothing short of a divine influence upon their hearts, can turn them from selfishness to benevolence, or from sin to holiness, without which they cannot see the kingdom of God.

5. If sinners love themselves because they are themselves, which is selfish and sinful; then after they experience a saving change from selfishness to benevolence, they love themselves in a manner totally different from what they did before. They love themselves in the same manner that God loves them. He loves them impartially, according to their characters and capacities. And they love themselves impartially, according to their characters and capacities. He values their interest no more, nor less than it is worth. And they value their own interest no more, nor less than it

is worth. Moses valued his interest less than the interest of all the Israelites. Paul valued his salvation less than the salvation of his whole nation. Moses and Paul loved themselves as disinterestedly, as they loved their fellow men. Many have imagined, that it is impossible for men to love themselves from any other motives, than selfish motives; and of consequence, that it is impossible for them to love others better than themselves. But this is a false and dangerous opinion. Just so far as men become holy or benevolent, they cease to love themselves selfishly; and so far as they cease to love themselves selfishly, they love their fellow men impartially; and so far as they love them impartially, they will not fail to love some more, as well as less, than themselves. Good men have no right to be selfish in the least degree; but they have a right to value their own temporal and eternal interest, according to its worth, and no more. And their goodness always leads them to form this just opinion, and to exercise this impartial affection, in respect to themselves. It is true, indeed, that when sinners become saints, they do not become perfectly holy and free from selfishness; but as soon as they shall arrive at the state of moral perfection, there will not remain the least tincture of selfishness in their hearts.

Finally, it appears from this discourse, that it is highly necessary to explain and inculcate the total selfishness of sinners. They never will believe, that they are totally depraved, until they see wherein total depravity consists. They are very apt to think, that their intellectual powers are as good as those of other men, and that they sometimes, at least, employ them in as amiable and virtuous a manner. This leads them to disbelieve and deny the doctrine of total depravity. But let them be taught, that total depravity consists in

total selfishness, which is a free and voluntary exercise, that belongs to the heart and not to the understanding, and they can no longer disbelieve, or deny that they are totally depraved. For they must know from their own experience, that selfishness has reigned in their hearts, and constantly led them to regard their own good, more than the good of others, or the glory of God. And as soon as they are convinced of the total selfishness of their hearts, they will be equally convinced of their total depravity. This shows the importance of explaining and inculcating the entire selfishness of sinners. There is no other truth so directly calculated to fasten conviction on their conscience, and to throw them into the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. As soon as they come to realize, that they have always acted from mean, mercenary motives, in all they have done for God, for themselves, and for others, their former goodness, and their former hopes built upon it, entirely vanish, and they see no ground of dependence, but only the undeserved and unpromised mercy of God. This was the case of Paul under a realizing sense of his total selfishness. When the divine law was brought home to his conscience, his sins revived and the ground of his hope gave way. For he realized, that he had always been governed by mere selfish motives in all his conduct, which was expressly forbidden, by the precept, "Thou shalt not *covet;*" that is, "thou shalt not feel, nor express the least degree of selfishness." It is in vain to preach about total depravity, without explaining it; for nothing will convince sinners, that they are totally depraved, until they are made to see and feel the total selfishness of their hearts. This Christ knew, and therefore, not only taught total depravity, but made it appear to be total selfishness. It is not the name, but the thing signified by total

depravity, that will carry conviction to stupid, self-righteous, and self deceived sinners. Upon this subject, it is impossible to be too plain and explicit. It is necessary, to teach sinners the nature and criminality of selfishness, not only to convince them of their guilt and danger, but also to convince them of their immediate and indispensable *obligation* to perform every duty, which God has required them to perform. As soon as they see and feel, that they are totally selfish, they cannot help seeing and feeling, that they have no excuse for the neglect of duty, but are under immediate and indispensable obligations, "to turn from all their transgressions; to make them a new heart and a new spirit; to repent and believe the gospel; and to walk in newness of life." When they clearly see and sensibly feel, that all their depravity and criminality consists in their free and voluntary exercises of selfishness, they can no longer plead it as an excuse for impenitence and unbelief, because they know, that it depends upon their own choice, whether they shall love, or hate God; whether they shall continue in, or cease from sin; whether they shall accept, or reject the offers of mercy; and whether they shall be saved, or lost. They feel the whole authority of the law and of the gospel, binding them to turn and live, while they realize, that their depravity is not their calamity, but their guilt. And when the preachers of the gospel have thus shown sinners the plague of their own hearts, they may with propriety and force address them in the language of the apostles, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God."

SERMON XVI.

THE ORDER OF GRACIOUS EXERCISES IN THE RENEWED HEART.

GALATIANS v, 6.

But faith which worketh by love.

PAUL was surprized that the churches of Galatia, which he had been instrumental in planting, should so soon be led into great and dangerous errours, by false teachers. "I marvel, says he, that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." The apostle had taught these christians, that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, and that his atonement is the only foundation of pardon and acceptance in the sight of God. But the false teachers denied the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and taught the doctrine of justification by the deeds of the law. This he represents as a fatal errour. "For, says he, if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." And he goes on to say, "I testify to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law: ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision;

but faith which worketh by love." The Judaizing teachers were ignorant of the nature and necessity of regeneration in order to those gracious exercises, which are connected with justification and eternal life; and it was owing to their ignorance of this saving change, that they maintained the doctrine of justification by the deeds of the law. The apostle, therefore, strikes at the root of their fatal errours by saying, that sinners are justified by that *faith* in Christ, which works *by love.* But it has long been a question, whether the apostle means, by this mode of expression, to assert that faith flows from love, or that love flows from faith. This is a very important question, because a just solution of it will directly tend to distinguish all true religion from false.

All evangelical writers and preachers maintain, that none can be real christians, without exercising *faith, repentance,* and *love;* but they differ widely in respect to the proper *Order* of these gracious affections. Some place faith before love and repentance; and some place love before repentance and faith. Though all true christians do actually experience these gracious exercises; yet very few are able to determine from their own experience, the *Order* in which they take place in a sound conversion. This we must learn chiefly from Scripture, and the nature of these holy affections. And that we may discover the truth upon this interesting subject, it is proposed in the present discourse, to consider two things. One is, the *Order* in which gracious exercises take place in a renewed sinner; and the other is, the importance of representing such gracious exercises in their proper Order.

1. Let us consider the order in which holy exercises take place in a renewed sinner. The Spirit of God in renewing, sanctifying, or converting a sinner, does not

give him any new natural power, faculty, or principle of action; but only gives him new affections or exercises of heart It is true, indeed, the Holy Spirit commonly awakens and convinces a sinner, before he converts him. He makes him see his danger, and feel his desert of eternal destruction, before he reconciles him to God, or turns him from sin to holiness. But as both sin and holiness consist in free, voluntary exercises; so the divine Spirit in converting a sinner only turns him from sinful to holy exercises.

Having premised this, I proceed to consider the order, in which he produces the first gracious affections If love be distinct from repentance, and repentance distinct from faith, which cannot be reasonably denied; then one of these affections must be exercised before another in a certain order. They cannot all be exercised together. The question now is, which is the first, second, and third in order. And here it is easy to see, that *love* must be before either repentance, or faith. Pure, holy, disinterested love, which is diametrically opposite to all selfishness, is the essence of all true holiness; and, of consequence, there can be no holy affection prior to the love of God being shed abroad in the heart.

A sinner must exercise love to God, before he can exercise repentance of sin, which is a transgression of his law. Though while he hates God, he may be sorry that he has provoked his displeasure; yet he cannot be sincerely sorry, that he has disobeyed and dishonoured a Being whom he hates. True repentance consists in that self-loathing and self-abasement for sin, which arises from a clear view of the glory and excellence of the divine character. Hence says Job to God, "I have heard of thee, by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself,

and repent in dust and ashes." No sinner, while in a state of enmity and opposition to God, can exercise such genuine repentance. This can flow from no other source, than supreme love to the supreme excellence of the Deity. Love, therefore, in the very nature of things, must be prior to repentance. The renewed sinner always loves God, before he repents of sinning against him. The holy Spirit, in the first instance, turns the heart of the sinner from hatred to love. Love is always the very first exercise of a renewed sinner. We cannot conceive it to be possible, that he should exercise either repentance, or faith, before he loves God whom he had hated. The *fruit* of the Spirit, yea, the *first* fruit of the Spirit, is that pure, holy, disinterested love, which is the fulfilling of the law.

The next fruit of the Spirit is repentance. As soon as the renewed sinner loves God supremely, he must loath and abhor himself for hating, opposing, and dishonouring such a holy and amiable Being. True repentance naturally and almost instantaneously follows true love to God. The renewed heart is tender and teachable, and leads the subject of it, to exercise godly sorrow and genuine repentance for all his past ingratitude, impenitence, and obstinacy. So God represents the true convert. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I *repented;* and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." The sinner no sooner loves God, than he justifies him, and condemns himself. Like the penitent publican, he freely acknowledges himself to be a sinner, and accepts

the punishment of his sins. The malefactor on the cross no sooner loved the suffering Saviour, than he repented of his sins, and accepted the punishment of them. Paul no sooner exercised true love to God, than he repented of his sins, and sincerely acknowledged the justice of the law, which condemned him to die. "For, says he, I was alive once without the law; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." As soon as the holy Spirit reconciles the sinner to God, he naturally loaths and condemns himself, as God loaths and condemns him, for his sins. He does not stand to inquire, whether God loves him and intends to save him, before he repents; for he feels both bound and disposed to repent, though God should cast him off forever. As it is morally impossible for the sinner to repent before he loves God, so it is morally impossible for him to refrain from repenting after he loves him. True repentance always flows from love to God, and not merely from a hope of salvation.

As repentance follows love, so faith follows both love and repentance. When the sinner loves, he will repent, and when he repents, he will exercise not merely a *speculative*, but a *saving faith*. It is morally impossible for a sinner to love Christ for condemning sin in the flesh, until he hates sin, and sincerely repents of it. It is morally impossible, that he should love the grace of the gospel, until he loves the justice of the law. It is morally impossible, that he should feel his need of a Saviour, until he sees and feels, that God would be righteous and amiable in sending him to destruction. But as soon as he loves the divine character, and the divine law, and condemns himself as the law condemns

him, he is prepared to love Christ and to depend upon him alone, for pardon and acceptance in the sight of God. He chooses to be saved through the atonement of Christ, because he sees no other way, in which God can be just, and yet justify and save him from deserved punishment. Having exercised love and repentance towards God, he is prepared to exercise faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Agreeably to this order of gracious exercises, John preached, saying, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And after John, "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye, and believe the gospel." Thus it appears, that *love* is the first exercise of the renewed sinner; *repentance* the second; and *faith* the third. This is the order, in which these gracious exercises always take place, and it is morally impossible, that they should take place in any other order. There may be a false faith, and a false repentance, before a false love; but there cannot be a true repentance before a true love, nor a true faith before a true repentance. True, disinterested love, which is the fruit of a divine influence, is always the first exercise of the renewed sinner, and both his repentance and faith flow from such pure love. So that faith's working by love does not mean, that love flows from faith; but that faith flows from love. I shall now endeavour to show,

II. The importance of representing these first exercises of the renewed heart in the Order I have mentioned. Upon this point, there is a diversity of opinions among those, who believe the absolute necessity of a spiritual and saving change, in order to salvation. Some say, that faith, repentance, and love are all produced at once in regeneration, and that they cannot

be considered as properly distinct, because they involve each other. They suppose, that faith implies love, and love implies faith; that faith implies repentance and repentance implies faith; or rather that faith implies all the christian graces. But this seems to be an absurd supposition. For, all holy exercises are really distinct; and though in a certain sense connected, cannot be exercised at one and the same moment. Some who allow, that faith, repentance, and love are really distinct exercises, and take place in succession; yet say it is of no importance to determine in what order they follow one another; because they have no fixt order of succession, but take place sometimes in one order, and sometimes in another. Sometimes the renewed person may exercise love in the first instance; sometimes faith in the first instance; and sometimes repentance in the first instance. The Spirit, they suppose, operates differently upon different persons. In one person, he may first produce faith; in another person, he may first produce repentance; and in another person, he may first produce love. He observes, they imagined, no certain order in his special operations, and consequently those who are the subjects of his special grace, are not conscious of the same order in their first gracious affections. One person may say, that he was first conscious of love; another, that he was first conscious of faith; another, that he was first conscious of repentance; and another, that he was conscious of no distinct order in his new affections, but only that they were new, and different from any that he ever was conscious of before. It is readily granted, that all these subjects of special grace, may speak the truth according to the best knowledge they have of their first gracious exercises; and yet it may be equally true, that the first gracious exercises in each of

them, took place in a certain order, and in the same certain order that we have mentioned. For, no person, perhaps, at the very time of his spiritual change, ever attended to the particular order of his holy affections, because his mind was first fixed upon the great objects of his love, his repentance, and his faith. Besides, though all true believers know that they have had different affections since they became believers from what they had before; yet very few know how to distinguish and describe their holy exercises according to their specifick difference, and proper names. Notwithstanding, therefore, this variety of opinions among real christians, respecting their first christian exercises, it must be certain, that the Spirit of God never acts inconsistently in converting sinners; or in other words, that he never produces repentance towards God, before he produces love to God; nor faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, before love to Christ. There is no room to doubt but that he always produces love before repentance, and repentance before faith. This is the only order, in which we can conceive it to be possible, for the holy Spirit to produce the first holy affections in the human heart, whether believers are, at the time of their conversion or afterwards, conscious of this order or not. Hence it is of great importance in describing a saving change, that the first exercises of grace should be represented in that very order in which they always take place. For,

1. Unless we place love before faith and repentance, we cannot reconcile regeneration with the divine law, which requires all men to love God immediately and supremely. If we say, that faith is the first gracious exercise, then we virtually say, that men ought to believe the gospel, before they love God; which is the same as to say, that it is not the duty of sinners to obey

the first and great command, until they become true believers in Christ. And this consequence is allowed by those, who place faith before love. They maintain, that no man can or ought to love God, until he believes, that he is freed from the condemning power of the law, and shall escape the everlasting displeasure of a *damning* God. They suppose, therefore, that faith produces both love and repentance. But this is totally inconsistent with the first precept of the divine law, and virtually dissolves the obligations of sinners to love God, until he gives them faith in Christ. But, on the other hand, if we represent love as the first fruit of the Spirit, then the doctrine of regeneration will appear entirely consistent with the divine law. For the law requires love as the first exercise of holy affection; and this is the first affection, which every renewed person exercises. Such is the consistency between the law of God and the special influences of his holy Spirit in regeneration. And in order to make this consistency appear, it is very important to represent love, as before repentance and faith, and not faith, as before love and repentance in the renewed heart. The experience of christians must be represented according to the doctrines of the gospel, and not the doctrines of the gospel interpreted and represented according to the various and inconsistent experiences of supposed christians.

2. It is of importance to represent love, as before repentance and faith, in order to make it appear, that sanctification is before justification, and the only proper evidence of it. Those, who place faith before love and repentance, suppose that men are justified before they are renewed or sanctified. They suppose, that saving faith consists in a man's believing that he is justified and entitled to eternal life, without any evi-

dence from scripture, sense, or reason. It is easy to see, that if faith could be before love and repentance, justification might be before sanctification, and consequently sanctification could be no evidence of justification. But this doctrine, though taught by many noted divines, is contrary to the whole current of scripture, which represents love, as before faith and repentance, and as the best evidence of pardon and justification in the sight of God. Paul says, "If children, then heirs;" and not, "If heirs, then children." John says, "Love is of God, and every one that loveth is *born* of God, and *knoweth* God." The only proper evidence of justification is sanctification. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If we place love before faith and repentance, we make repentance and faith holy exercises, and holy exercises the evidence of justification and a title to eternal life. The placing of the first exercises of the renewed heart in this order, is of the highest practical importance. It lays the only solid foundation for all real christians to know, that they are born again, and heirs of everlasting life. I must add,

3. It is absolutely necessary to place love before repentance and faith, in order to distinguish true religion from false. All true religion essentially consists in pure, holy, disinterested love; and all false religion essentially consists in interested, mercenary, selfish love. Now, those who place faith before love and repentance, make all religion selfish; because upon their supposition, all religious affections flow from a belief of their being elected and entitled to eternal life. They maintain, that men must first believe, that God through Christ is reconciled to them, and intends to save them from the wrath to come. And who that believes this, in respect to himself, will not love God, and be very

sorry that he has ever offended *him*, who has always been so partial in his favour. The worst man in the world would be glad to escape endless misery; and if he can make himself believe, that God intends to save him in his sins, he will love and admire him for it. So that this faith, which is before love, and altogether selfish, will produce a false love, a false joy, a false repentance, a false hope, a false submission, a false obedience, and a whole life of false religion. But if we place supreme love to God, for what he is in himself, before faith; then all the gracious exercises, which flow from it, will be holy and disinterested affections. The repentance, the faith, the joy, the hope, the submission, the obedience, and the whole religious life, which flows from such love, will be all holy and acceptable in the sight of God. And such persons as thus love God, before they know that he loves them; that repent, before they know that they shall be forgiven; and that love and believe in Christ, before they know that he died for them in particular, may have clear and satisfactory evidence, that they have experienced a saving change; that they are meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; and that they shall forever love and enjoy God, and be perfectly happy in his favour and service.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the first exercises of renewed sinners always take place in the same order; then all real saints have always had precisely the same kind of religious experiences. They have always been the subjects of the special, renewing, sanctifying influences of the holy Spirit. He has converted all sinners, who have ever been converted in all ages. And though he has not always made use of the same external means in

converting them; yet he has always produced in their hearts the same kind of effects, and in the same order. He has caused them first to exercise supreme love to God, then true repentance of sin, and then a saving faith in the divine Redeemer. He converted Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and all the Old Testament saints, in the same manner, in which he converted Jews and Gentiles in the Apostle's day. And we are told, that "they were all made to drink into one spirit;" that is, to exercise the same kind of holy affections. The psalms of David contain not only his own religious experiences, but the religious experiences of the church of God in general; and it appears, that the love, the repentance, the faith, the hopes, the fears, the joys, and the sorrows of all true believers had always been of the same nature. And it is upon this ground, that the apostle with great propriety, exhorts christians in all future ages, "to be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Though real christians may have different opinions, in speculation, concerning some of the doctrines of grace, and concerning the mode and order of the Spirit's operations, in renewing or converting sinners; yet their own spiritual experiences are all essentially alike. And could they agree to call the same things by the same proper names, they would no longer contend, whether love be before repentance, and repentance before faith; but would all allow, that their repentance and faith flowed from supreme love to God. This is the truth in respect to all who have experienced a saving change, and this truth they will all sooner or later believe. Those christians, who have been properly taught, do now speak, as well as experience the same things.

2. If the holy Spirit, in converting sinners, always produces love to God before faith in Christ; then it is extremely erroneous, to represent faith as previous to love in the renewed heart. This is the greatest and most prevailing errour among those, who believe in experimental religion. For all who place faith before love, suppose that men cannot love God, before they believe that God loves them, and intends to save them. But the love, the repentance, and all the religious affections, which flow from such a faith, are totally selfish, and diametrically repugnant to all the precepts of the divine law. And for this reason, the religion originating from such a source, is properly called Antinomianism, or a religion against the law of God. All Antinomians suppose, that unregenerate men are not bound to love God as the law requires, until they believe the gospel; and that believing the gospel is the same as believing that Christ died for them in particular, and that they are actually interested in the benefits of his atonement. It is easy to see at once, that such a faith will naturally produce love to God, love to Christ, love to the holy Spirit, love to the visible friends of Christ, love to prayer, praise, and the external performance of all religious duties. Such a faith may make the most devout, affectionate, and lively christians in appearance, while their hearts are full of nothing but spiritual pride, hypocrisy, and selfishness. What made the Scribes and Pharisees so devout, so prayerful, and so strict in their external conformity to all the rites and ceremonies of their religion? was it not because they thought they stood high in the favour of God? What made the multitudes at first follow Christ, with their hosannahs? was it not a belief that he loved them, and came to save them in particular from temporal and eternal ruin? The doctrine, that faith is be-

fore love in conversion, is calculated to lead men into the most fatal delusion. It teaches them to believe, that Christ died for them in particular, and intends to save them; and to love him, and to love God, to repent, and to obey, from mere mercenary, selfish motives, which is a fatal error, and if cordially embraced and acted upon, will destroy them forever. Christ always did, and always will reject those, who love him merely for his favours.

3. If there can be no true experimental religion, but what originates rom that supreme love to God, which is before faith in Christ; then there is ground to fear, that there is a great deal of false religion among all denominations of Christians. For many of their most devout Teachers inculcate the doctrine, that faith in Christ is always before love to God. And it is to be presumed, that a doctrine so agreeable to every natural man, has been cordially embraced by multitudes, who have been made acquainted with it, by books and by preaching. If we look into many grave Treatises published upon vital or experimental religion, we find faith placed before love and repentance. If we read Hervey's Dialogues, Marshall's Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, The Marrow of Modern Divinity, or many of the Writings of the Presbyterean Divines in Europe or America, we find that those Authors inculcate the doctrine, that faith always precedes love, and lays the foundation for love, in the sinner's conversion. If we hear many of the most admired Preachers of the present day, we find them most frequently and most pathetically dwelling upon the love of Christ to sinners, and endeavouring to persuade them to believe, that Christ is willing to receive them into his favour just as they are, before they exercise either love or repentance. They preach this false and dangerous

doctrine, in direct opposition to the well known sentiments of those Divines, who, by their writings and preaching, teach the true Order of gracious affections in the renewed heart. People generally are much more fond of hearing their errour, than the opposite truth; and consequently their preaching is calculated to make many converts, and to make them rapidly They first endeavour to alarm sinners with a deep sense of their perishing condition by nature; and then most affectionately urge them to believe, that Christ loves them, and is willing to save them just as they are, unholy and impenitent. And as soon as awakened, impenitent, selfish sinners come to believe this, their faith fills their hearts with love, and gratitude, and the most ravishing joys. There are many ministers, and some who affect to be the most learned, the most eloquent, and the most sincere friends of vital piety, who are using every method in their power, to propagate through the country, sentiments which are directly suited to promote such unholy, unsound, and dangerous conversions. ! ?

Finally, this subject teaches all, who have entertained a hope of having experienced a saving change, the great importance of examining themselves, whether they have ever exercised that precious faith, which flows from supreme love to God. There has been a great deal of false religion in the world, and many have been fatally deceived, in respect to the nature of their religious experiences. The vast multitudes, who entered into covenant with God at mount Sinai, were deeply impressed with what they had heard and seen, and probably thought they were sincere friends to Jehovah; but they deceived and destroyed themselves; and are set up as awful monuments, to deter others from the same self-deception. Many who followed John and Christ, and heard them gladly, and thought they

were true converts; soon lost all their religious affections, and turned bitter enemies to the gospel of Christ. This gave Christ occasion to warn his hearers against the danger of entertaining false hopes, which would not stand the test of the last day. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Men are in as much danger of forming and living upon false hopes now, as ever they were. They are in danger of being deceived, by the great enemy of souls, who often appears in the form of an angel of light, to deceive and destroy. They are in danger of being deceived by false teachers, who come to them under the garb of the ministers of Christ, and of the friends of truth. And they are in still greater danger of being deceived, by the deceitfulness of their own hearts. Surrounded by so many dangers of deceiving themselves, in respect to their religious hopes, they need to be very strict and impartial in examining the nature of their religious affections. Hence says the apostle, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves, know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ, is in you, except ye be reprobates." And again he says to the same professors of religion, "I am jealous over you with a godly jealously. I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." This he said in direct reference to false teachers. It is commonly through the means of some false doctrines, that men deceive themselves, with false hopes of being the subjects of grace. They have no right to hope, that they have experienced a saving

change, merely because they have been in great anxiety, and distress, and afterwards felt peculiar love, and joy, and peace. For love, and joy, and peace, may flow from an appropriating faith, or a belief, which has no evidence from scripture, sense, or reason, that Christ died for them in particular, and intends to save them. Such religious affections, which flow from such a false faith, afford no evidence of the renovation of the heart. But on the other hand, those have a right to hope, that they have passed from death to life, if they are conscious of having loved God for what he is in himself, of having hated sin because of its odious nature, and of having loved Christ for honouring God, and opening the door of mercy to perishing sinners. Such repentance and faith flowing from such supreme love to the divine character, afford good evidence of a sound conversion. For these are the love, the repentance, and the faith, which the holy Spirit always produces in those whom he renews and sanctifies. And such sanctification of heart is the only evidence of justification, and a title to eternal life. The Antinomian faith precludes all self-examination. Those who place faith before love, hold that it is a sin for those who have once believed, that Christ died for them in particular, to doubt of their gracious state. The reason is obvious. If a faith before love, and without love, be a justifying faith; then assurance belongs to the essence of faith, and consequently, there is no occasion for sanctification, to prove a believer's justification. But let no man be deceived; for if he have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

SERMON XVII.

ON THE GROWTH OF GRACE.

2 PETER, iii, 18.

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

THE apostles were solicitous not only to convert men to the belief and profession Christianity, but to build them up in their most holy faith. They often visited the churches which they had planted, to look into their state, and to rectify whatever they found amiss in their sentiments, or practice. And when they could not consistently visit them, they frequently wrote them very friendly and occasional epistles, in which they meant to instruct them in some particular doctrines, or warn them against some particular errours, or solve some particular cases of conscience, or exhort them to constancy and perseverance in their christian course. But Peter, in writing to christians in general, seems to have but one great object in view, and that is, to urge upon them the importance of their growing in grace, which would afford them the best support under their trials, and the best security against all the snares and seductions of their spiritual enemies. The conclusion of this last epistle is agreeable to the whole tenor of both. "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the errour of the wicked, fall from your steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Christians are still in a state of moral imperfection, and exposed to the subtile devices of the great adversary of their souls, and to the snares and temptations of the present evil world. The in-

junction in the text applies, with all its force, to the feeble and humble followers of Christ, at this day. They need to make continual advances in grace, and in that knowledge, which is conducive to their spiritual strength and edification. There is the same connexion between knowledge and grace, that there is between means and ends. It is not to be expected, that christians will grow in grace, unless they grow in the knowledge of Christ, as he is revealed in the gospel. This, therefore, will be the leading sentiment in the present discourse:

That christians must grow in knowledge, in order to grow in grace. I shall,

I. Consider what is meant by their growing in grace.

II. Consider why they must grow in knowledge in order to grow in grace.

III. Show the importance of their growing in both these respects.

I. We are to consider what is meant by their growing in grace. The word grace is used in various senses in Scripture. It sometimes signifies the love of God to all mankind in sending his Son to die for them. It sometimes signifies his peculiar love to those, whom he renews and sanctifies by the influences of his holy Spirit. And it sometimes signifies the love, the faith, the repentance, and all the holy affections of true believers or real christians. In this sense, the apostle uses the word grace in the text. He supposes, that all who have cordially embraced the gospel, have begun to live in the exercise of holy affections, and he exhorts them to grow in grace and press forward in their christian course. The question now is, How shall they perform this duty? This leads me to say,

1. They must exercise grace more constantly. It is generally and justly supposed, that the best of christians in their present state of imperfection, are not always in the actual exercise of grace. Whether there can be any such thing as grace, without exercise, I shall not stand to consider; but supposing the common opinion to be true, that christians are not always in the exercise of grace, it must be allowed, that they ought to exercise grace more constantly, which is actually growing in grace. For the more constantly and uninterruptedly they exercise purely holy affections, the more they conform to the divine will, and do really advance in the divine life. They follow the example of the apostle Paul, while growing in grace and pressing forward towards the mark of sinless perfection. So far as they fail in the constancy of their gracious exercises; just so far they fall short of that moral perfection, which is their indispensable duty. If they let their thoughts wander with the fool's eyes to the ends of the earth, their gracious affections will certainly be interrupted, and vain thoughts and evil affections will creep into their hearts. Some christians, who are circumspect and watchful, and keep their hearts with diligence, have many more right affections than others, who are in a low and declining state of religion. They carry about with them the spirit of the gospel, and pursue their secular concerns, as well as perform their religious duties, with gracious sincerity. Whether they eat, or drink, or whatever they do, they mean to do all to the glory of God. They live as seeing Him who is invisible, and endeavour to keep themselves in the fear of the Lord all the day long. This is what all christians ought to do, to grow in grace, and make progress in a holy and devout life.

2. Uniformity, as well as constancy, is implied in growing in grace. By uniformity is meant, the exercise of all the various christian graces. These are numerous, according to the vast variety of objects with which christians are surrounded, and the great variety of circumstances in which they are placed. Want of uniformity is a very great and common imperfection of christians. They are often like Ephraim, "a cake not turned." They are sound in some respects, but unsound in other respects. Their beauties are mixed with blemishes. They may be devout in their religious performances; but not so serious and circumspect in their common intercourse with the world. They may be very conscientious in some points; but more lax and inconsiderate in matters of equal, or higher importance. Some seem to have more love to God, than to man; while others seem to have more love to man, than to God. Some shine in one grace, and some in another; while very few shine in all the beauties of holiness. But Christ was uniform as well as constant in the exercise of every species of holy affections. And his followers ought to have grace for grace, and be as uniform as he was, in exercising right affections on all occasions and under all circumstances. This the apostle Peter plainly intimates is necessary in order to grow in grace. "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." The more uniform christians become in their holy affections, the more they grow in grace, and the nearer they approach

to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Proficiency in one grace will not atone for deficiency in another; and therefore every christian ought to become more and more uniform, as well as constant, in every christian grace. While christians maintain constancy and uniformity in their gracious affections, they will increase in fervency and activity in every duty. Their coldness and backwardness and unfruitfulness always arise from the want of constancy and uniformity in their holy exercises. Let them only become constant and uniform in their love to God and man, and they will be pure as God is pure, and completely obey his command, "to grow in grace."

II. We are next to inquire, why growth in knowledge is necessary in order to the growth in grace. This necessary connexion between grace and knowledge is plainly intimated in the text. "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." God has always employed knowledge as the most proper mean to promote holiness in the hearts of his people. He has given them his written word, and appointed men to feed them with knowledge and understanding. And he has done this for the very purpose of promoting their spiritual edification and growth in grace. Accordingly we read, "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the *perfecting* of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Some, however, have thought and said, that knowledge is of little, or no advantage to christians, and rather tends to obstruct, than to promote vital piety. It is, therefore, a

pertinent and important inquiry, why knowledge is necessary to the spiritual edification of christians. Here it may be observed,

1. That knowledge tends to increase their obligations to grow in grace. The knowledge of duty always increases an obligation to do it. Christ said to those who heard his instructions, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin." The apostle asserts, that "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." The truth of these declarations is founded upon the tendency of knowledge, to oblige every person to act as well as he knows. The more christians know of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the greater is their obligation to be conformed to his character and will. And could they have a clear, connected, and comprehensive view of all that he has done, and will do, for the glory of God, the salvation of sinners, and the good of the universe, their obligations to grow in grace would be in exact proportion to their extensive knowledge. All christians know by their own experience, the tendency of knowledge to increase their moral obligation to duty. The more knowledge they receive from the word or the providence of God, the more they feel morally bound to live in the constant exercise of grace. Peter, Paul, and the other apostles were under higher obligations to grow in grace, than common christians, because they had higher degrees of knowledge. All the inhabitants of heaven are under higher obligations to make continual advances in holiness, than any of the saints here on earth, because they dwell in superior light. As knowledge, therefore, has a direct tendency to increase the obligations of christians to perfect holiness in the

fear of God, so it is necessary that they should grow in knowledge in order to grow in grace.

2. Divine knowledge not only increases the obligations of christians to grow in grace, but actually increases the holiness of all their holy affections. One exercise of love to God may be more holy than another. The degree of holiness in every exercise of love to God, is always in proportion to the light or knowledge, which the person has, at the time of exercising that particular grace. A christian has a much clearer and more extensive view of God, at one time, than at another, and his love is always virtuous in exact proportion to the degrees of his present knowledge. One exercise of faith is more virtuous than another, because the believer may have much greater knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, at one time, than he has at another. The same holds true of submission, joy, gratitude, and every other christian grace. The virtue of every holy affection bears a due proportion to the magnitude of the object towards which it is exercised. It is more virtuous to love Christ, than to love a friend of Christ, because he is a far greater and nobler object, than any individual christian. It is more virtuous to love God, than to love any created being, because he is a far greater and nobler object, than any created intelligence. The celebrated Howard, who spent his property and his life, in relieving the objects of charity in Britain and in various other parts of Europe, was a man of benevolence, and his benevolence was in proportion to his knowledge. As he had a far more extensive view of the miseries of mankind, than christians in general, so his exercises of kindness and compassion were much more virtuous, than theirs towards similar objects. God is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works; and of consequence, there is more virtue in one

exercise of his benevolence towards mankind, than in all the benevolent exercises of all his benevolent creatures. They never have had, and never will have, such a full and perfect view of the whole creation, as he has every moment; and their virtue can never exceed their knowledge, but only increase as that increases. Suppose an American prisoner should be converted in Algiers, and have no opportunity to read the Bible, to hear a sermon, or to converse with a single christian, after his conversion; he might, by meditation and prayer, grow in grace all his days till he died: but he could not grow in grace so fast, as if he enjoyed all the means of light and instruction, which he once enjoyed in his native land. He might, indeed, have as many holy exercises, as if he had been planted in the house of the Lord, and lived in the circle of the most lively christians; but his holy exercises would terminate upon fewer and less important objects, than theirs, and consequently be much less virtuous. The more real christians become acquainted with their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the better they understand the great and essential truths of the gospel, and the more they attend to the great things, which God has done, is doing, and has promised to do, to accomplish the glorious design of redeeming love, the more gracious exercises they will *probably* have, and it is *certain*, that the virtue of all their gracious exercises will *increase*, as their *knowledge* increases. The virtue of their desires to promote the glory of God, will be in proportion to their knowledge of God. The virtue of their desires for the spread of the Gospel, will be in proportion to their knowledge of the truths and importance of the gospel. The virtue of their desires for the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom, will be in proportion to their knowledge of the present and promised extent of

his kingdom, and all the good contained in it. In a word, the increase of knowledge will tend to increase both the *number* and the *virtue* of all their holy affections; and for this reason, it is necessary, that they should grow in knowledge, in order to grow in grace.

III. It now remains to show the importance of their growing in both these respects. Christians do not generally realize the importance of growing in grace and making continual advances in holiness. Many imagine, that they may safely rest satisfied with the lowest degree of grace, because this will certainly secure their final salvation. But though the weakest christians shall eventually obtain eternal life; yet it is of very great importance, that true believers should become strong in faith and every other christian grace, by using the proper means to obtain this desirable end. Here, then, I would observe,

1. That the honour of religion requires christians to grow in knowledge and grace. Though the men of the world are disposed to hate and despise religion, yet they are constrained to respect it in those professors, who appear to be both knowing and growing christians. When they find professors, who are deficient in knowledge, they ascribe all their apparent sanctity to ignorance, superstition, or enthusiasm. Or when they find professors, whose knowledge surpasses their apparent sanctity, they then ascribe all their apparent religion to hypocrisy. But when they find christians, who understand the gospel, and are able to give a reason of the hope that is within them, they are constrained to believe and to acknowledge, that their religion is a divine reality. Grace adorns knowledge, and knowledge adorns grace; and both united highly recommend true religion to the world. No man can despise knowledge united with grace, nor despise grace

united with knowledge. It was knowledge that recommended the piety of Christ himself, and commanded the respect and admiration of his enemies. They exclaimed, "How knoweth this man letters!" They saw his perfect holiness united with his profound knowledge of those scriptures, which they allowed to be of divine Inspiration; and this evidence of the truth and importance of his religion they could not despise, nor resist. While the followers of Christ increase in spiritual knowledge and gracious affections, their good cannot be evil spoken of. They shine as lights in the world, and lead others to glorify their Father who is in heaven. They adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, which reflects great honour upon their religion, and carries conviction to the consciences of sinners, that they are guilty of inexcusable folly, as well as sin, in neglecting the one thing needful. Besides,

2. It is of great importance, that christians should grow both in knowledge and in grace, not only on the account of others, but on their own account. For, in the first place, their growth in these respects, will be the most effectual security against the gross and dangerous errours to which they are continually exposed in their present imperfect state. It is a good thing, that the understanding be enlightened with knowledge, and the heart be established with grace. Those who have a clear and extensive knowledge of the gospel, can easily distinguish its great and fundamental doctrines from every false sentiment and fatal errour. Scoffers and deceivers early appeared in the christian church, who wrested the Scriptures unto their own destruction. And it is in particular reference to such men, that the apostle Peter exhorts christians to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, "lest they should be led away with

the errour of the wicked, and fall from their own steadfastness." Knowledge and grace united, enable christians to detect, expose, and reject the various errours which the enemies of the gospel are zealous and artful in propagating. While true believers clearly understand and faithfully practise their own religion, they are able to meet and refute every false doctrine, which may be proposed and recommended to their belief. This the apostle John suggests to those christians, who were exposed to fatal errours in his day. "Little children it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us, but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye *know* all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth: but *because ye know it*, and that no lie is of the truth." It is as important and necessary now, that christians should grow in knowledge as well as grace, to guard themselves and others against those, who lie in wait to deceive. Christians never had a louder call to grow in knowledge and grace, that they may be able to contend earnestly and successfully for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. They are surrounded by false teachers, who are zealously endeavouring by art and subtilty, to bring in damnable heresies; and nothing but a zeal according to knowledge will prepare them to discover and refute such fatal errours, and to repel the attacks of all their spiritual enemies.

Growth in knowledge and grace will happily tend, in the second place, to remove darkness and doubts

from the minds of christians. They often meet with these inward trials, which greatly depress their spirits and enfeeble their exertions, as well as disturb their peace and comfort. Grace is the evidence of grace, and knowledge discovers this evidence. It is always owing to some kind of ignorance, that real christians are involved in darkness and doubts, respecting their good estate. But by growing in knowledge and grace, they will take the proper and effectual method, to dissipate all the clouds which hang over their minds, and to regain that peace, which the world cannot give, nor take away. Declining christians may expect to be troubled with darkness and perplexity of mind, and the fiery darts of the great accuser of the brethren, because they lay themselves open to both external and internal temptations, and provoke God to withdraw his Spirit and the light of his countenance from them. This he threatens to every backslider. Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see, that it is an evil and bitter thing, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." But repenting, returning, growing saints may confidently hope, that God will graciously return to them, and give them the joy of his salvation.

Furthermore, growth in knowledge and grace will prepare christians for the delightful and acceptable performance of every duty. While they are declining in religion and their hearts are departing from God, they are apt to stand, and hesitate, and try to reason themselves into doubts about both the revealed and providential will of God. They endeavour to excuse themselves for the neglect of disagreeable and self-denying duties, because they do not see their way

clear to perform them. But when they grow in knowledge and grace, they intuitively see what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, which they ought to follow. Hence says Solomon, "A wise man's heart is at his right hand." And again, "A wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment." And again, "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way." This Solomon knew, by happy experience; for while he was growing in knowledge and grace, he prayed for a wise and understanding heart, and his request was abundantly answered. In consequence of having such a heart, he found less difficulty in knowing, and less reluctance in doing his duty. Growing saints are ready to hear the voice of God in his word and providence, and to run in the way of his commandments, with peculiar pleasure and delight. And the more readily they discern, and the more cheerfully they perform the various duties devolved upon them, the more sincere and acceptable are all their services in the sight of God.

It is, finally, of great importance that christians should make continual advances in knowledge and grace, to prepare them for the closing scene of life. They are every day drawing nearer and nearer to the time of their decease, when they must leave this world, and go the way of all the earth. If they neglect to improve their minds in knowledge and their hearts in holiness, they may expect to live in bondage, and die in darkness and distress; for christians commonly die very much as they live. But if they make it their business to perfect holiness in the fear of God, and to go from strength to strength in their journey towards heaven, they may humbly hope to triumph over death and the grave, and be able to say, "O death! where is sting? O grave! where is thy victory?" It appears from the sacred history of growing saints, that their hopes

and prospects grew brighter and brighter, the nearer they approached to the confines of death and eternity. Hear the last words of David. "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." Hear also the language of Paul, whose growth in grace enabled him to say. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." The more christians grow in knowledge and grace, the better they are prepared to perform their last great act on the stage of life, to the glory of God, to the honour of religion, to their own joy, and to the benefit and consolation of those whom they leave behind.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If knowledge be necessary to promote the growth of grace; then the most instructive preaching must be the most profitable. Many are fond of making a distinction between sentimental and practical preaching, and consider the latter as much more useful than the former. They insinuate, that christians at this day, do not need to be instructed in the doctrines of the gospel, but only to be quickened and animated to the practice of the duties of religion and morality. But there is reason to believe, that saints as well as sinners, at this day, stand in great need of being instructed in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This knowledge lies at the foundation of all true devotion, and true devotion lies at the foundation of all

practical piety and christian morality. The great and essential truths of the gospel feed and nourish a holy heart, and directly tend to promote every christian grace and moral virtue. And so far as divine truth tends to promote holiness of heart, just so far it equally tends to promote holiness of life. Christ was a sentimental preacher. In his sermon on the mount, he explained and enforced the great doctrine of disinterested love, which distinguishes all true religion from false, and strikes at the root of some of the most dangerous errours, not only of the Scribes and Pharisees, but of professing christians at the present day. Paul, the first and great apostle of the Gentiles, tells them, that he determined to know nothing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. In his epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Hebrews we find, that in order to promote the growth of grace in true believers, he dwells abundantly upon the great and fundamental doctrines of christianity. And he rejoiced in the thought that he had not shunned to declare all the counsel of God, nor kept back any thing that was profitable in his preaching. It is sentimental and instructive preaching, that is best suited to quicken, comfort, and reprove real saints; and to undeceive self-righteous and self-deceived hypocrites. One reason why so many prefer what they call practical preaching to sentimental, is because they do not love the soul-humbling, and self-denying doctrines of the gospel. They hate to hear preachers explain and inculcate the doctrines of divine decrees, of divine sovereignty, of divine agency, of special grace, and of the continued influence of the holy Spirit in the performance of every duty. They are much better pleased to hear discourses upon external duties, than upon internal graces. But though sentimental preaching be not

the most pleasing and popular, it is the most necessary and profitable. This appears to be true, by universal observation and experience. If we search the history of the Church from Christ's day to the present time, we shall find that devotional and practical piety has always flourished the most under the most sentimental and instructive preaching.

2. If religious knowledge be conducive to the growth of religious affections; then that religious conversation among christians is the most useful, which is the most instructive. They should often speak one to another upon religious subjects, and endeavour to promote their mutual edification and growth in grace. But they too often converse without much edification or benefit, because they do not aim at giving or receiving instruction. If their conversation turn principally upon the general stupidity of sinners, or the general coldness of professors, or the great corruption, obstinacy, and deceitfulness of their own hearts, it rather tends to nourish spiritual pride and self complacency, than any truly gracious affections. But if they converse freely and familiarly upon the peculiar doctrines, duties, and promises of the gospel; or upon the peculiar nature of the christian graces; or upon the best means of promoting vital piety; or upon their own obligations to walk worthy of their high and holy calling, they cannot fail of instructing each other, and of promoting their mutual love, zeal, and activity in their christian course. Christ always conversed instructively with his disciples and others, and on one occasion he so clearly and fully opened the Scriptures, that he made the hearts of those with whom he conversed, to burn with a holy love and joy. This example his friends ought to follow in their free and familiar intercourse together. Indeed they are expressly

commanded to avoid all vain and evil speaking, and to converse instructively and profitably on all occasions. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." There are a great many christians, who might be extremely useful, if they would aim at edifying, rather than gratifying one another, in talking upon experimental religion. It is their duty freely and frequently to converse together upon those glorious truths and objects, which they will delightfully converse upon, when they shall meet and dwell together in the kingdom of glory.

3. If divine knowledge has a tendency to promote all the christian graces and virtues; then growing christians have an increasing evidence of their good estate. Our Saviour compares grace in the heart to seed sown in the earth, which springs up and grows very gradually and insensibly. Though the best of christians grow very gradually, yet they carry about with them marks of their increasing holiness, which is an increasing evidence of their being the subjects of a saving change, and of their having gone forward, rather than backward, in their religious life. And if they critically and impartially examine the exercises of their own hearts, they will find more or less of the following effects of the growth of grace.

They will find that they have become more and more sensible of the essential difference between *nature* and *grace*. Natural and spiritual affections often put on a similar appearance, when they flow out towards the same objects; which renders it the more difficult to distinguish them from each other. Christians are very liable to put nature for grace, and selfishness for benevolence. When their natural affections unite with

their spiritual affections, they are apt to imagine, that they are all pure and holy. All these affections, however, are distinguishable, and growing christians learn by experience to distinguish them. The more they increase in knowledge and grace, the more clearly they discern the difference between holy affections. and all others which bear the nearest resemblance of gracious exercises.

By growing in grace, they experience a growing sense of their constant and absolute dependence upon the divine Spirit for all right affections. They lean less to their own understanding; trust less to their own hearts; and depend less upon their own resolutions and strength. They find more sensibly, that they are not sufficient of themselves to think any thing as of themselves; but that their sufficiency is of God. They are convinced by experience, that the preparation of their heart and the answer of their tongue is of the Lord. They feel more and more disposed to acknowledge God in all their ways, and to rely upon his gracious aid and influence in every duty.

Their growth in grace gives them a growing sense of their vileness and unworthiness in the sight of God. The more holy they are, the more clearly they discern the beauty of holiness and the deformity and turpitude of sin. As Job grew in grace by passing through the furnace of affliction, he felt an increasing sense of his moral imperfection and vileness in the sight of God, to whom he said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." A clear view of the holiness and majesty of God, had a similar effect upon the holy heart of Isaiah, who said, "Wo is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of

unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts." The apostle Paul, while pressing forward towards sinless perfection, had a deep and growing sense of his remaining depravity, and moral turpitude. "O wretched man that I am, said he, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." David often sighed and groaned under a sense of his sin and guilt. Though growing saints really increase in holiness; yet the more grace they have, the more clearly they discern their remaining corruptions, and the more they loath and abhor themselves for them.

Hence growing christians have a growing sense of the grace of God in their salvation. The more they grow in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the clearer views they have of the divine character, and of the divine law, and of the difference between nature and grace, the more they are astonished at the great things which have been done for them. They are ready to adopt the grateful language of the apostle, "By the grace of God, we are what we are." They are astonished at the grace of God, in providing a Saviour; at the grace of Christ in dying for them; and at the grace of the holy Spirit in subduing their stubborn hearts, and continuing to carry on a work of sanctification in them. The whole scheme of redemption appears to be full of the riches of divine grace.

Hence growing christians have a growing desire to bring forth fruits of righteousness. In whatever station they are fixed; in whatever business they are employed; in whatever condition they are placed; they feel more and more disposed to lay out themselves, to promote the glory of God and the good of mankind. The growth of grace produced this effect in Abraham, who left his country and friends, and offered up his Son, for the glory of God; it produced this effect in

Moses, who gave up the most promising prospects, in obedience to God, and for the good of his people; and it produced the same effect in the apostles and primitive christians, who suffered the loss of all things, to promote the cause of Christ, and diffuse the blessings of the gospel through the world. Growing christians are not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. They bring forth fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold.

These are some of the happy effects of the growth of grace, which all growing christians may discover in their own hearts, and which may give them satisfactory evidence, that they are born of God, and are ripening for heaven. But declining christians carry about with them the marks of their declension. Their own hearts testify against them, that they have been cold and backward in duty; that they have abused the word and ordinances of the gospel; and that they have grieved the holy Spirit, and provoked him to withdraw his gracious and comforting influence from them. Their unhappy and dangerous case calls upon them, to remember from whence they are fallen, to repent, and to do their first works. It is their immediate duty to make their calling and election sure, by growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As new-born babes, let them desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. God has promised to give his holy Spirit to them that ask him. Let them wait upon the Lord, and they shall renew their strength; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

SERMON XVIII.

ON THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF HUMILITY.

LUKE xviii, 14.

And he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

OUR Saviour spake this parable to certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. He meant to convince such self-righteous and self-deceived sinners of their guilty and dangerous situation. And nothing could be better adapted to answer this benevolent and important purpose, than to represent their inward views and feelings, as diametrically opposite to the views and feeling of a true penitent. "Two men, said he, went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote on his breast; saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." This last clause in the parable naturally leads us, in the first place, to consider the nature of humility; and in the second place, the necessity of it, in order to obtain divine mercy.

1. We are to consider the nature of humility. There is the more occasion of describing this gracious exercise of heart with peculiar accuracy and precision,

because mankind are naturally disposed to misunderstand and misrepresent it. Mr. HUME scrupled not to say, "that humility ought to be struck off from the catalogue of *Virtues*, and placed on the catalogue of *Vices*." This must have been owing to his gross ignorance, or extreme malignity. The most charitable supposition is, that he really mistook a mere selfish and painful sense of natural inferiority for true humility.

This leads me to observe, that a man's humbling himself is something very different from his having a mistaken and reluctant sense of his own inferiority in respect to his fellow-mortals. Though men generally think too highly of themselves in regard to their inferiors, yet they as generally think too meanly of themselves in comparison with their superiors. The truth is, mankind are much more upon a level, in point of natural excellences and imperfections, than many are willing to acknowledge. The depressing sense, which some entertain of their natural inferiority, is greatly owing to their ignorance. But knowledge, and not ignorance is the mother of both humility and devotion. Those who know the most of God, of themselves, and of their fellow men, may be the most humble and devout persons in the world. There is a meanness and criminality in that *voluntary humility*, which the apostle mentions and condemns.

Humility is likewise different from submission, which seems to resemble it. Submission is the respect, which an inferior justly owes to a superior. The child owes submission to the parent, the subject to the prince, and the creature to the great Creator. But inferiors manifest no humility in submitting to their superiors. They only take their proper place, with-

out sinking or degrading themselves in the least degree.

Furthermore, humility is something different from condescension which is the part of a superior, and consists in stooping to an inferior. Thus the Creator may condescend to a creature, the prince to a subject, the rich to the poor, and the aged to the young. But though condescension is stooping, yet it is by no means degrading. Real condescension always displays a noble and amiable spirit. I may now safely say, that humility essentially consists in self-abasement, which is self-degradation, or a voluntary sinking not only below others, but below ourselves. It is therefore, wholly founded in guilt. None but guilty creatures have any cause or reason for abasing themselves. But every guilty creature ought to abase himself, whether he is willing or unwilling to perform the mortifying duty. For sin is of a degrading nature, and always sinks the sinner below himself. Sin degraded Satan from the highest to the lowest creature in the universe. The moment he rebelled against his Maker, he lost his original rank in creation, and sunk below himself and all the holy angels. Sin degraded Adam, and his first offence sunk him below the lowest creature on earth. Sin has had the same effect upon all his posterity, and made them more vile and abominable than the beasts that perish. The higher and nobler any intelligent creatures are by nature, the lower and meaner they become by sin.

Hence the humility, which sinners ought to exercise, consists altogether in self-abasement. They ought voluntarily to sink down to that place, which their sins deserve, or to be willing to lie as much below themselves and others, as their guilt can sink them. This is totally different from mere abasement. They

may be abased, and abased as low as they deserve to be abased involuntarily, and while they are actually aspiring to rise above themselves and others; but there is no humility in such constrained and involuntary abasement. Satan is the subject of this kind of abasement while his heart is full of pride and self-exaltation. But when the guilty are heartily willing to lie as low as their sins deserve, then they really abase themselves and exercise true humility. This is the feeling which all sinners ought to have, and which every one must have, who is finally raised to the kingdom of glory. And this is only feeling according to truth. Sin has degraded every sinner, and he must be willing to degrade himself, and voluntary take the place, which justly belongs to him. Such self-abasement is the very essence of that humility which all men ought to exercise. As there is nothing but sin, that can really degrade us, so there is nothing but sin, that calls for real humility. It belongs not to innocent, but only to guilty creatures, to humble themselves. Sinners have forfeited their natural rank among the creatures of God, and ought to abase themselves before him. This always appears perfectly proper to true penitents, who are sensible of their ill desert, and have correspondent feelings towards themselves, and towards God, whom they have injured and offended.

And now, if we look into Scripture, we shall find humility there represented as founded in guilt, and consisting in self-abasement. In the twenty sixth chapter of Leviticus, God said concerning Israel in case they should prove disobedient and forfeit his favour, "If then their uncircumcised hearts be *humbled*, and they accept the punishment of their iniquity: then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant

with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land." It appears from this divine declaration, that humility is occasioned by guilt, and consists in self-abasement, or the voluntary accepting of the punishment due to sin. To such a spirit God always brings sinners, when he renews their hearts and prepares them for mercy. The prophet speaking of a time of general reformation says, "The lofty looks of man shall be *humbled*, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." These representations of humility may be illustrated, by various examples recorded in the Old and New Testament. Jacob felt that humility, which consists in self-abasement, when he said unto God, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant."

David exercised that humility, which consists in self-abasement, under a sense of what he had deserved at the hand of God for numbering the people. When he saw the angel of the Lord brandishing his sword over Jerusalem, he humbly said unto God, "Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned; but as for these sheep what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, O Lord my God, be on me, and on my father's house." This was real and deep humiliation for sin. It was voluntary sinking down as low as God should please to abase him. Job felt and expressed the same self-abasing spirit under the chastizing hand of God. In the depth of his complicated afflictions he said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." And when he was reproached for such self-abasement, he

pertinently replied, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" This shows, that his humiliation flowed from a sense of guilt and unworthiness in the sight of God. Our Saviour himself set up the publican's prayer as a proper example of that humility, which becomes a sinner, and which will always meet the divine approbation. While the Pharisee boasted of his innocence and goodness, the Publican confessed his guilt, and humbly cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." This man was accepted, and the other rejected. This man was willing to abase himself, but the other exalted himself. This man was humble, but the other was proud and self-righteous. The prodigal son, when he came to himself, felt the spirit and spoke the language of real humility. He said to himself, "I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and I am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants." He freely confessed, that he had sinned, that he had sunk his character, that he had degraded himself below the rank of a son, and therefore declared, that he was willing to take the low and ignoble place of a servant. Paul was a very humble man, and his humility consisted in self-abasement for sin. Once he says, "He is less than the least of all saints;" by which he meant, that he was the most guilty and ill-deserving in the sight of God. So he explains this seeming paradox in another passage. "For I am the least of all the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, *because I persecuted the church of God.* But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all." Here it is very evident, that Paul's humility did not arise

from ignorance of his own superior talents and services. He does not pretend, that he had less knowledge, or less grace, than the other apostles; but only that he had *more guilt*, because he persecuted the followers of Christ. And on this account, he was undoubtedly the most guilty and unworthy of all the apostles, and ought to lie the lowest before God, which he has done, and will do to all eternity. Having shown what it is for sinners to humble themselves before God, I proceed to show,

II. That they must do this, in order to obtain pardoning mercy.

Our Saviour declares, that "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted," meaning that none but such as humble themselves shall obtain pardon and acceptance in the sight of God. For he says in the conclusion of the parable, "This man," meaning the humble publican, " went down to his house justified," pardoned and accepted, "rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The whole current of Scripture teaches sinners, that they must humble themselves before God, in order to find favour in his sight. The apostle says to them, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." David declares, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and such as be of a contrite spirit. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." And "thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and *humble* spirit, to revive the spirit of the *humble*, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." There is a propriety, and

even necessity of sinners exercising such humility or self-abasement, in order to obtain divine mercy. For,

1. God cannot consistently receive them into his favour before they voluntarily humble themselves for their transgressions in his sight. They have hated, disobeyed, and opposed him, without a cause. They have despised and rejected the Son of his love. They have grieved and quenched his holy Spirit. They have abused his goodness and forbearance, and rendered themselves objects of his holy displeasure. He cannot, therefore, consistently with the purity of his nature and the dignity of his character, receive them into his special favour, until they freely and of their own accord abase themselves before him. Though Christ has made atonement for their sins, so that justice may be displayed in their forgiveness; yet God cannot forgive them, consistently with his honour and dignity, until they freely and voluntarily take their proper places before their righteous and injured Sovereign. This is agreeable to the common sentiment of mankind, in regard to the proper conduct of the offended towards offenders. The prince will not forgive the subject, the superior will not forgive the inferior, nor will any person forgive another, until the offender manifest humiliation and self-abasement. And it much less becomes the supreme Majesty of heaven, to forgive the transgressor, until he humbles himself before him, and sincerely cries like the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." If God should return to sinners before they return to him, he would humble himself before them, instead of their humbling themselves before him. He cannot deny himself nor give his glory to another. He can no more act below his dignity, than he can act contrary to his wisdom, holiness, or justice. There is, there-

fore, a moral necessity of sinners humbling themselves before him, in order to obtain his special and everlasting favour. Besides,

2. It is impossible for sinners to receive divine mercy, before they take their proper places, and are willing to sink as low as divine justice can sink them. If it were possible for God consistently to pardon and receive them into his favour, before they humble themselves for their sins, yet they could not receive pardon and acceptance from the hand of God, as an expression of mere mercy. God cannot shew mercy in pardoning, where he cannot shew justice in punishing. If God cannot justly punish sinners forever for their sins, then he cannot display mercy in saving them from everlasting punishment. And if sinners do not see and approve of his justice in punishing them, they cannot see and cordially acknowledge his mercy in pardoning their transgressions, and saving them from future and eternal misery. It is true, they might be glad, if God would not inflict upon them an unjust and undeserved punishment, but they could not consider his withholding punishment as an act of mercy. It is, therefore, indispensably necessary, that they should humble themselves in his sight, before he lifts them up. They must voluntarily sink themselves, before they can submissively desire him to save them from sinking forever under his just displeasure. They must of their own accord lay their necks on the block, before they can sincerely plead to be saved from death. Though they can, while totally unhumbled, talk about the mercy of God, and in words plead for mercy; yet they cannot cordially accept of his mercy, until they see and love his justice, and freely resign themselves into his hands, to save or destroy, as shall be most for his glory. The humility, which God requires of sinners,

as the condition of pardoning mercy, is not an arbitrary, but an indispensable condition. It is founded in the character of sinners, and cannot be separated from them. Their guilt calls for humility, and they cannot be released from exercising it, if they are eventually saved. Mercy cannot come to them in any other channel, than that of humility, because God cannot grant, and they cannot receive mercy, before their hearts are humbled. And there is no humility but that which consists in self-abasement; which can prepare them to receive mere mercy from the hand of God, who may in strict justice doom them to everlasting destruction.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If humility essentially consists in self-abasement for sin; then we may safely suppose, that neither God the Father, nor the Lord Jesus Christ ever exercised any affection, which may be strictly called humility. These divine persons never had the least occasion of humbling themselves for any unwise, or unholy, or improper conduct towards any created or uncreated object in the universe. David, indeed, under a lively and solemn sense of the divine Majesty, exclaims, "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high! Who *humbleth himself* to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!" These expressions naturally convey the idea of *condescension*, which is stooping; but not the idea of humility, which is *degrading*. It becomes the supreme Being to condescend or stoop to his creatures, but not to abase or degrade himself before them. And as it was the design of the Psalmist to exalt, and not to degrade the Deity, we ought to interpret his expressions agreeably to his plain and obvious meaning. These observations will equally apply

to and explain what the Apostle says concerning the humiliation of Christ. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he *humbled himself*, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It was indeed a glorious act of condescension in Christ, who was equal with the Father, to obey his will, and suffer and die, not for his own sins, but for the sins of the world. Though divine condescension and human condescension are the same species of holy affection; yet neither divine nor human condescension is the same species of affection, as self-abasement. Strict and proper humility, therefore, may not be ascribed to God or Christ, but only to penitent and self-abased sinners.

2. If humility consists in self-abasement, we may clearly see how low sinners must lie before God, in order to obtain his pardoning mercy. It is generally believed, that they must humble themselves in some measure; but it is a serious and interesting question, how low they must fall before their injured and offended Sovereign. Some evangelical and experimental writers have maintained, that they ought to lie as low as their sins deserve, and to be willing that God should treat them according to their demerit. But it seems to be the more common opinion of great and pious divines, that sinners are not obliged to lie so deeply abased before God. These two opinions are not only diverse from, but directly opposite to each other, because there is no medium between sinners being willing, or unwilling, to suffer the due punishment of their sins. The plain and important question now is, which

of these opposite opinions is agreeable to truth. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, that sinners ought to abase themselves before God for their sin, and that they ought to abase themselves as low as their sin deserves. And what sin deserves, let the Assembly of divines say. "Sin deserves God's wrath and curse both in this life, and in that which is to come." This answer agrees with what the inspired writers say upon the subject. The apostle declares, "The wages of sin is death." And our Saviour says, that he will adjudge the finally impenitent to this punishment at the last day. "Depart from me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Such a punishment every sin deserves, and such a punishment every finally impenitent sinner must forever suffer. All penitent and self-abased sinners must, therefore, be willing to suffer the wrath and curse of God forever. But still it may be inquired what is implied in this willingness. It does not imply love to pain or misery, but only a love to that benevolent justice, which inflicts it. All the impenitent at the day of judgment, will see the justice of God in casting them off forever, while their hearts will rise in enmity against their holy and righteous Judge, for giving them the due reward of their deeds. But those who are abased for sin, *love that justice* of God, which they see and feel would be displayed, if he should actually treat them according to their demerit. They are, therefore, willing that God should glorify himself by them, either by making them happy, or making them miserable forever. Though they ardently desire to be saved; yet they are willing to give up their own personal good, if the glory of God, which is an infinitely greater good, requires it. Such a willingness, that God should dispose of them for his own glory, is absolutely

necessary, in order to accept of pardoning mercy, and, indeed, in order to enjoy the happiness of heaven. For how could they be happy in seeing God treat other sinners according to their deserts, if they were never willing that he should treat them in the same manner? Or how could they say, "Amen, Alleluia," while they saw "the smoke of the torments of the damned ascending forever and ever," if they were never willing to lie down in everlasting sorrow?

Judas and Paul were once both sinners and deserved to be destroyed; Judas for betraying Christ; and Paul for persecuting him in his followers. But Paul was saved and Judas was rejected. Suppose, these two remarkable persons should meet, and Judas should ask Paul, whether he was ever willing that God should cast him off, and treat him according to his deserts? What answer can we suppose, that Paul would give to this pertinent and solemn question? He must say, either that he was, or that he was not, willing that God should cast him off forever. If he should say, that he never was willing that God should cast him off forever; would not Judas reply, Paul, you and I are perfectly agreed in our sentiments and feelings upon this solemn subject, for I was never willing, that God should cast me off forever. There is only a circumstantial difference between us. Let God only put me in your place, and you in my place, and I shall love and praise him as you do, and you will hate and blaspheme him as I do. Could Paul deny these consequences of being unwilling to be cast off forever? But if Paul should say to Judas, I remember the time, when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. I then said, the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. And ever since that time, I have delighted in the law of God after the inward

man; and I still delight in it, and would, with my present feelings, delight in it, if I were fixed in your place forever. My heart is essentially different from what it was once, and what yours always was and always will be. I know what it was to be in a condemned state, and to love God for condemning me, I can therefore love God for condemning you as he condemned me, and for casting you off forever, as he might have justly cast me off forever. It is because I have thus cordially accepted the punishment of my iniquity, that I can say, that it is by the grace of God, that I am what I am, and where I am. So low Paul abased himself, and so low must every one abase himself, in order to be finally exalted.

3. If humility consists in a free and voluntary self-abasement for sin, then it is the most amiable and shining exercise of a holy heart. The truly humble person lies as low as he deserves to lie, and takes his proper place, as a sinner, freely and of his own accord. This is exercising a more amiable and self-denying spirit, than any innocent creature ever did, or ever can exercise. It appears amiable and beautiful in the principalities and powers above to fall down in cheerful and unreserved submission before the supreme Majesty of heaven and earth; but it appears much more beautiful and amiable in Adam, Abraham, Moses, Samuel and the prophets, Paul and the Apostles, to fall down in cheerful self-abasement before the throne of divine grace, and ascribe their salvation wholly to Him who was slain, and redeemed them unto God by his blood. The humility of all who finally reach the kingdom of glory, will be the most beautiful trait in their character, and render them the most amiable in the eyes of all the pure and innocent spirits, who

have always been joyfully employed in the service of their Maker.

Finally, it appears from this whole discourse, that nothing short of real, cordial self-abasement can qualify any of our sinful race, to obtain and enjoy the happiness of heaven. Many have desired and endeavoured to get to heaven, without performing the mortifying duty of self-abasement. The Pharisee who went up to the temple to pray, trusted in himself that he was righteous, and should obtain salvation, by his mere external duties of religion and morality. Paul once built his hopes of heaven upon his blameless, beautiful, self-righteous conduct. But the Pharisee was rejected, and Paul was disappointed.

It is utterly in vain for impenitent and unhumbled sinners to hope, that any of their desires, or prayers, or self-righteousness, will qualify them for the favour and enjoyment of God. Every thing they say, desire, or do, while destitute of humility, is nothing but self-exaltation, which is diametrically opposite to a holy and heavenly spirit. God knows the proud afar off, and will never admit them to dwell in his presence. Sinners must be clothed with humility, before God will exalt them to his heavenly kingdom, and before they can possibly be happy there.

It is therefore the present indispensable duty of all self-righteous and self-confident sinners to humble themselves before God. Upon this necessary and condescending condition, he will save them from ruin and exalt them to glory. And surely those who have injured and offended him, by their groundless disaffection to his character, and disobedience to his law, ought to humble themselves deeply before him, and plead for his pardoning mercy. And if they will only give up all their self-righteous and self-justifying pleas, and

humbly cry with the poor Publican, "God be merciful to us sinners," he will hear, and answer, and save them. But if they continue to exalt themselves, he will effectually humble them. He has appointed a day, in which he will expose all their turpitude and guilt to the view of the whole universe. He has appointed a Judge to condemn them, and doom them to everlasting shame and contempt. And to complete their humiliation, he has appointed a song of triumph to be sung over them to all eternity. And can their hands be strong, or their hearts endure, in the day that God shall thus deal with them? No, they must sink down into everlasting despair. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, who will render vengeance to his enemies, and reward them that hate him!

SERMON XIX.

GREAT MEN THE SERVANTS OF GOD.*

ISAIAH xlv, 4, 5.

For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no god beside me. I girded thee, though thou hast not known me.

MANKIND have always been extremely prone to overlook the hand of God in those events, which he has brought to pass by the instrumentality of subordinate agents. This has often led them to feel and to conduct very improperly under the dispensations of divine providence. To rectify and prevent such a great practical errour, God has been pleased, time after time, to predict some of the most important revolutions in the civil and religious world, and to name or describe the principal agents, by whom they were to be effected. He foretold the descent of Jacob and his family into Egypt, and their preservation there, by the agency of Joseph. He foretold the suppression of idolatry among his degenerate people, by the exertions of Josiah. And in a later period of the Jewish nation, he foretold their long and distressing captivity in Babylon, and their happy deliverance, by the instrumentality of a Pagan prince. To the character and conduct of this illustrious personage our text has immediate reference. The prediction is truly solemn and sublime,

* Preached on the occasion of the death of General WASHINGTON. January 30, 1800.

becoming the majesty of the God of Israel and the Supreme Sovereign of the universe. "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings; to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut. I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I the Lord, which will call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no god beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me."

This Cyrus was the son of Cambyses, king of Persia, and of Mandana, the daughter of Astyages, king of Media. He early discovered something great and noble in his nature; and as he advanced in years, he more than answered the raised expectations, which his extraordinary virtues and talents had excited. He maintained, through a vast variety of scenes, an entire uniformity of character, and never differed from himself, only in that growing greatness, which finally placed him in the first rank of the first men in the world. This great man God was pleased to name, near two hundred years before he was born, as the principal agent, by whom he intended to deliver his chosen people from their wretched state of captivity, and to punish their powerful and cruel oppressors. Accordingly, in the course of his particular providence over the kingdoms of men, he raised up Cyrus to the zenith of human power and greatness, and made him the free,

voluntary instrument of promoting the cause of religion, and the happiness of the world. Hence it appears from this prediction. taken in connexion with its wonderful accomplishment,

That God justly claims a sovereign right, to make great men the instruments of executing his wise and benevolent designs.

To illustrate this sentiment, and to impress it upon your minds, my hearers, will be the business of the ensuing discourse.

God claims a supreme right to the services of great men, in almost every page of his word. How often do we hear him saying of this, of that, and of the other great character, *he is my servant?* How often do we meet with this sovereign language, my *servant* Moses? my *servant* Job? my *servant* Jacob? my *servant* Israel? my *servant* Isaiah? my *servant* Nebuchadnezzar? By such a mode of speaking, God holds up his sovereign right to employ great men just as he pleases, in executing the designs of his providence. But he more fully displays this prerogative, by publishing to the world what great men shall do, before they are brought into being. He claimed the services of Solomon, the wisest of men, and appointed the business of his life, before he was born. Thus he addressed his royal father. "Behold a son shall be born unto thee, who shall be a man of rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever." In the prediction concerning Nebuchadnezzar, God claimed a sovereign right to employ him as the minister of his vengeance,

in punishing the people of his wrath. He asserted his absolute divinity and sovereignty, in his prophetic address to Cyrus. "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no god beside me. I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." And he displayed the same sovereign right to the powers and influence of great men, in his predictions of Alexander the great, of Augustus Cæsar, of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, of Constantine the great, of Mahomet, and of the man of sin. The Bible abounds in predictions of future events, to be brought about by the instrumentality of moral agents; and in all such predictions, God has made an absolute claim to the services of those, whom he has appointed to fulfil them.

It now appears sufficiently plain, we trust, that God does claim a sovereign right, to make great men the instruments of executing his wise and benevolent designs; but our doctrine further asserts, that this claim is absolutely just. We are now come to the most important branch of our subject. And in order to make it appear, that God justly claims the high prerogative of making great men the instruments of doing great good in the world, permit me to observe,

1. That he gives them their superior natural capacity of doing good. He inspires them with that bright and glowing genius, which is the essence of mental greatness, and which distinguishes them from the general mass of mankind. As one star differs from another star in glory, so one man differs from another in the original frame and strength of his mind. There is convincing evidence, that this difference in the intellectual powers of men is not the fruit of cultivation and improvement, but the peculiar gift of Heaven. A great and capacious mind often makes an early appearance, before secondary causes have

time to operate upon it. This was observable in Cyrus. Even in his childhood, he discovered an uncommonly strong and elevated genius, which excited the attention and admiration of the best judges of the human understanding. Hence we may justly conclude, the Father of spirits formed his mind, and endowed it with those great and astonishing talents, which he displayed in the course of his extensively useful and important life. In the same manner, God furnishes all great men, with all their natural powers and abilities to do great and noble actions.

2. He presides over their education, and gives them the means of improving their superior talents, and forming themselves for eminent usefulness. There is reason to think, that a vast many minds of the first magnitude have been buried in obscurity, for the want of proper education and refinement. Had Solomon or Socrates been denied the means of refining and invigorating their original talents, it is altogether probable, that they never would have arisen to that peculiar pre-eminence, which they will justly, and always hold in the great family of man. Hence, in forming great men, God takes particular care, that they shall receive such an education, as will best qualify them for their high stations in society. This appears from one or two memorable instances. Moses was the appointed instrument of delivering his nation from the depression and misery of bondage. And though in his infancy he discovered a lovely mind in a beautiful body; yet God saw it necessary that both should be refined in the court of Pharaoh. And God took particular care of the education of Cyrus. He placed and kept him under the instruction of his father Cambyses, who early instilled into his mind the principles of sobriety, temperance, and every other moral virtue. This vir-

tuous education proved an effectual guard against that luxury, prodigality, and dissipation, to which he was exposed at twelve years old, in the court of Persia. Though his grandfather and his nobility united their efforts to eradicate his virtuous habits, and corrupt his morals; yet they could make no impression upon him. He despised their customs and manners, and resolved to escape their pernicious influence, by taking shelter under the authority and example of his virtuous father. Here he pursued his studies, and collected a large store of that general knowledge of human nature and the affairs of the world, which eminently qualified him for that exalted sphere, in which he was ordained to move. As God had anointed and set him apart for himself; so he presided over every part of his education, and adapted it to the designs of his providence. This is one step, which God always takes, in making great men the instruments of great good.

3. God gives them the disposition, which they at any time have, to employ their superior abilities, in promoting the happiness of mankind. We read, "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." And we are told, "the preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." God constantly superintends great men, and guides all the motions of their hearts. He gave Cyrus his amiable disposition, as well as his great abilities. He put it into his heart to devise, adopt, and prosecute the great designs of subduing and delivering nations. And he always exercises the same supreme control over the affections, views, and pursuits of those, whom he employs in executing the wise and benevolent designs of providence. Without exercising this sovereign dominion over the secret springs of action in great men, he

could not justly claim the prerogative of making them his sword, his rod, his staff, or his shepherds. Great men "are not sufficient of themselves, to think any thing as of themselves; but their sufficiency is of God." He gives them that amiable disposition, which prompts them, to seek the general welfare of a society, country, or nation; and which renders them the objects of general admiration, esteem, and affection. In order to do great good, great men must have the love and confidence of great numbers. Cyrus was the idol of his country, of his friends, and of his foes. By his amiable manners, and friendly conduct, he captivated the hearts of high and low, and drew whole armies over to his side. This was of the Lord's doing, and absolutely necessary, to enable him to execute the designs of Heaven.

4. God gives great men the opportunity of employing all their power and influence, in executing his wise and benevolent designs. Men may possess great talents, and yet never find a proper opportunity of displaying them to the best advantage. There must be an extraordinary concurrence of circumstances, in order to give great men a proper sphere of action. It is only now and then, that a scene opens, to draw forth the latent energies of a great mind. In the history of the world, we find a few such scenes. There was a time, when God gave one man an opportunity of saving not only his family, but his race. This was the time of the flood, when Noah was made the father and Saviour of the world. There was a time, when whole nations were to be destroyed, to pave the way for the deliverance and prosperity of the church. That was the time of Moses, and that was the opportunity, which God gave him to display all his greatness. God appointed a time to destroy the enemies of his chosen

people, and strike an awe upon surrounding kingdoms. That was the time of David's glory and triumph. There was a time when a single man had meditated and well nigh accomplished a design of destroying the whole body of the Jews. That was the time to display the power and virtue of Mordecai. To add no more, there was a time, when a small nation, of about an hundred and twenty thousand men, were to gain the empire of the world. This amazing scene was reserved for Cyrus; and gave him an opportunity of displaying all his virtues and talents, and of transmitting the fame of both to the latest posterity. The hand of God is always concerned, not only in giving great men their talents, but also in giving them proper opportunities of exerting them in the service of their Maker and of their fellow men. Nor is this all. For,

5. It is God who succeeds their exertions for the benefit of the world. In this respect, he claims a supreme control over the conduct of the greatest kings, statesmen, and warriors. He claims to be the Lord of lords and King of kings; and assumes the prerogative of giving the kingdoms of men to whomsoever he will. Abraham could not have founded a nation, unless God had been with him, and prospered him wherever he went. Joseph could not have preserved the Egyptians and his father's family from perishing by famine, had not God been with him, and succeeded his great and benevolent exertions. It was God who taught David's hands to war, and his fingers to fight; and who gave him his victories over the enemies of the church. But the divine agency appears the most conspicuous in the astonishing successes of Cyrus. To an eye of reason, it must appear next to impossible, that he should ever march an army to the walls of Babylon; and absolutely impossible that he should

ever enter that city, which was the metropolis of the world, and which both nature and art had combined to render impregnable. But his enterprising spirit formed the great design, and God rendered his mighty efforts successful. This signal success God granted to Cyrus, on purpose to display his real divinity, and absolute sovereignty over the kingdoms and nations of the earth. Such an entire superintendency over the movements of Cyrus, God expressly claims in the prediction of his victorious arms. "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut. I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no god beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." It always equally depends upon God, whether great men, with all their shining talents, and superior abilities, shall succeed in any of their great and important enterprises. So that in all cases, God may justly claim the prerogative of making them the instruments of executing his own wise and benevolent designs.

The thoughts, which have been suggested upon this subject, are not, we trust, altogether foreign to the great occasion, which has called us into the house of God, at this time. We are professedly convened to pay public respect to the memory of that Great Man, who has lately fallen in our Israel. And certainly we have just ground to lament the decease of *Washington the Great.* This character of right belongs to him. Great men have always been very rare in our world. Not one in a century, not one in a million

of mankind, has ever appeared. Though there have been many shining characters, in the various learned professions; yet none of these, however acute their genius, or however extensive their learning and information, have deserved to be called *great*. A profession always cramps the genius, circumscribes the sphere of action, and stamps a littleness upon any human character. A great man is above learning, and every learned profession. He must be an independent Citizen, and have a full scope for the display of all his mental powers. He must be either a Statesman, or Warrior. In this capacity, he may found, or rule, or save a nation; and thereby establish a character, more durable than marble, and as lasting as the page of history. In our Washington both the Statesman and the Warrior were united. In the former character, he held an elevated rank; but in the latter, he shone without a rival, and even eclipsed the greatest captains of antiquity. God gave him a graceful figure, and a noble, commanding aspect. He put him in possession of a large, independent landed interest, which placed him in the first rank of citizens, inspired him with the love of liberty, created an aversion to tyranny, and effectually guarded him against the corrupting influence of places and pensions. Entirely free from the subtilties of law, the intrigues of a court, and the schemes of ambition, he lived greatly independent. In this most eligible situation, he stood prepared to hear and to obey the calls of his country. Possessed of a strong and capacious mind, which was able to devise and keep its own counsels, he was fitted to stand at the head of an army and at the head of a nation, and to maintain a controlling influence in both the cabinet and the field. Such an influence, it appears from the papers that have been published, he actually did maintain, during the whole course of the Ameri-

can war. He first formed his army, by diffusing a military spirit, and establishing military order and subordination through the whole. He next concerted his plans of operation, and provided the means of carrying them into effect. And in order to this, he found it necessary to superintend the grand council of the nation, and often to direct their most important measures. For a number of years, Washington was the soul of America, and, by his superior wisdom and weight of character, he absolutely governed thirteen professedly *united*, but actually *disunited* States. In this momentous situation, while he carried in his hand the fate of more than three millions of people, he displayed the astonishing resources of his mighty mind. At one and the same time he attended to a multiplicity of great and interesting objects. While he directed the movements of all the American forces, stationed at very different and very distant posts, he kept a watchful eye over the motions of the British army, and all the manœuvres of their most skilful and famous generals. In the midst of all these weighty, and seemingly overwhelming cares and concerns, he stood alone, giving advice to all, and receiving assistance from none. There was not a man in the world, capable of looking further, or directing better, than himself. And here let us reflect with admiration and astonishment, that he never failed in a single instance, of executing his most complicated and important designs. He concerted the plan of dislodging the enemy from Boston, and he executed his purpose. He formed the scheme of surprizing and capturing the Hessians at Trenton, and he actually took them, by surprise. He conceived, concealed, and carried into execution the complicated and deep design, of conquering the whole British army, at Yorktown. By such masterly strokes of gen-

eralship, he stands the rival of a Cyrus and a Hannibal, in those very qualities, which they have rendered their names immortal.

This great man, we are now to remember, God raised up in mercy to America. God gave him his great abilities, together with an opportunity and a disposition, to display them in his country's service. It was God who gave him the universal love, the entire confidence, and unanimous suffrages of his fellow citizens. God placed him at the head of our armies, and at the helm of our government. God girded his loins, directed his counsels, and succeeded his mighty efforts, through the cares of the cabinet, and the dangers of the field. Let the man be absorbed in his Maker. Let *Washington the Great* be loved, and admired, but never adored. Our first regards are due to Him, who made him the instrument of his own glory, and the founder of our national independence, and the principal promoter of our national peace, prosperity, and rising greatness.

As the goodness of God has been displayed, in the *Life*, so his awful and amiable Sovereignty has been displayed, in the *Death* of the Father of our country. His life was an host. His sword was the hope of America, and the terrour of all her enemies. But the mighty man is fallen, in a day of darkness and of doubtful expectation. This great and afflictive event has spread a gloom over America, and penetrated every grateful patriotic heart in the nation. It has thrown the Court, the Camp, and the Navy into tears. It has pierced the bosom of our illustrious President, the surviving support and glory of his country. It has, in a word, produced a more general, a more deep, and a more sincere mourning, than was ever, perhaps, produced by the the death of any other man in the world. Jesus wept.

We may weep. A nation may mourn, but never murmur nor despond. This national bereavement was designed to throw us into the hand of God, and make us feel our absolute dependence on the great first Cause. God is still able to raise up instruments to fulfil his purposes towards a people, whom he has always delighted to protect, to increase, and to prosper. If we eye his hand in the gift, and submit to his will, in the removal, of our late deliverer and benefactor, we may humbly hope, that God will never permit us to suffer for the want of future statesmen and warriors, to guide all our civil and military movements, in defence of our liberties and our lives. The death of Washington is a national trial. If to honour him, we rob God of his glory, God will be displeased, and most probably our whole nation will be punished. In the midst of our national grief, let us conduct like a people, who believe the existence, and acknowledge the providence, of an infinitely holy, wise, righteous, and benevolent Being. And while we pay a supreme respect to him let us gratefully perpetuate the memory of him, whose memory ought to be embalmed, and transmitted to the latest ages of time.

By this, we shall promote the honour of our nation. Though there may have been men in America, whose talents were equal to Washington's, yet they never had an opportunity to display them. And though there may arise among us men hereafter, whose talents shall be equal to Washington's, yet they will never have an opportunity to display them. Washington, therefore, must necessarily be the greatest man, that this quarter of the globe ever did, or ever will produce. It is the genius, and not the soil of a country, that renders it illustrious. It is the agents in great revolutions, and not great revolutions in a nation, that render it famous.

The mighty revolutions in Persia, in Greece, and in Rome had long since been lost in oblivion, had they not been attached to the immortal names of Cyrus, of Alexander and the Cæsars. So the virtues, the talents, and the mighty deeds of Washington, will do more to render the Americans famous in the annals of history, than all the fruits of his mighty exertions. If we mean to stand high among the nations of the earth, we must perpetuate the memory of the Founder of our nation.

By this, we shall also transmit a bright and amiable example, for the admiration and imitation of future Statesmen and Warriors. There is nothing equal to examples, to inspire the minds of young politicians and warriors. Alexander formed his character according to the standard of Homer's heroes. That Poem he always carried about with him. The life and character of Washington may form thousands to shine in the cabinet and in the field. This ought to animate us to send down the current of time our illustrious Washington, with undiminished lustre and glory. And I must add, that by doing justice to Washington, we shall do honour to God. For our sakes he raised him up. For our sakes, he gave him all his greatness and glory. Gratitude to God, therefore, requires us to commemorate his death, admire his character, imitate his excellencies, and be watchful of his fame. His fame and ours are inseparably united, and both deserve our gratitude to Him, who has made us a nation, defended our liberties, and placed us high above all other nations, in civil and religious advantages. Let us, therefore, sing aright of mercy as well as judgment, and exercise that gratitude and submission, which the smiles and the frowns of heaven, now loudly demand. Amen.

SERMON XX.

ON TRUE SUBMISSION TO GOD.*

JOB IX, 12.

Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, what doest thou?

JOB was afflicted not more for his own benefit, than for the benefit of others. God intended his scenes of sorrow should draw forth the feelings of his heart, and display his true character before the eyes of the world. And agreeably to this purpose he directed, that both his afflictions and his conduct under them should be recorded and transmitted to future ages, that mankind might hear of the patience of Job, and see the end of the Lord, in his fatherly chastisements. His discourses with his friends gave him a good opportunity of justifying the sovereignty of God, in the dispensations of his providence. This was the principal subject of dispute between them. They insisted, that God treated every man according to his real character, in his providential conduct towards him; but he maintained, that God acted as a sovereign, without any design of distinguishing his friends from his enemies, by outward mercies and afflictions. Accordingly, in the preceding verses, he gives a striking description of divine sovereignty, which he owns he had too often disregarded, but now most sensibly realized. And in the text he seems to admire, that any should not both realize and cordially submit to the sovereignty of God. "Behold, he taketh away, who *can* hinder him? who

* Occasioned by the Death of Deacon ROBERT GILLMORE.

will say unto him, What doest thou?" These words present to our serious consideration this plain truth.

It is the natural tendency of afflictions to make the friends of God realize and submit to his Sovereignty.

I shall first consider the natural tendency of afflictions to give the friends of God a realizing sense of his sovereignty, and secondly consider the natural tendency of this realizing sense of divine sovereignty to bring them to unreserved submission.

1. Let us consider the natural tendency of afflictions to give the friends of God a realizing sense of his sovereignty.

This is one of the essential and most amiable attributes of the Deity, which he continually displays in dispensing both good and evil to mankind. But saints, as well as sinners, are very apt to suffer God to pass by them unheeded in the course of providence, and to forget that he holds them and all their temporal and eternal interests in his holy and sovereign hand. This stupidity good men always lament, when they are awakened to realize his sovereignty. Job in his affliction could say, " God is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered? Who removeth the mountains, and they know not: who overturneth them in his anger. Who shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble. Who commandeth the sun, and it riseth not; and sealeth up the stars. Who alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea. Who doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number." These bright and glorious manifestations of divine sovereignty, he tells us in the next verse, he disregarded in the days of his prosperity. "Lo, he goeth by me, and *I see him not:* he passeth on also, but *I perceive*

him not." But when God laid his heavy hand upon him, he cries out with great sensibility, "Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, what doest thou?"

Now, afflictions always display the sovereignty of God, and of course naturally tend to make his friends realize it. No afflictions for the present are joyous but grievous, and never in their own nature desirable. Whenever God afflicts his children, he displays his sovereignty over them, and gives a practical and sensible evidence, that he has a right to dispose of them contrary to their views, their desires, and most tender feelings. But, of all afflictions, those which are called bereavements, give the clearest display of divine sovereignty. These constrained Job to turn his attention to this awful and amiable attribute of the Deity. "Behold, *he taketh away*, who can hinder him?" He had taken away Job's comforts one after another, until he had nearly stripped him of every earthly enjoyment. Though he had given him the bounties of his providence in sovereignty; yet he displayed his sovereignty in a clearer and stronger light, by taking them away in such a sudden and unexpected manner. The reason of this is obvious. Mankind naturally think that they have a *right* to all they *possess*. After blessings are put into their hands, they imagine they have a *right* to hold them. They do not make the same claim to unbestowed favours. These they are more ready to allow, that God has a right to grant or to deny. But their children, and friends, and other outward comforts, which are in their possession; they are extremely apt to claim as their own. By bereavements, therefore, God practically declares, that he is greater than man; and has a supreme right to take away any thing, and even every thing, which he has,

in mere mercy, given him. God means to display his sovereignty, in the most sensible manner, to those whom he bereaves of enjoyments, to which they were the most attached, and to which they laid the strongest claim. Hence it is the natural tendency of afflictions, in general, and of bereavements in particular, to make the friends of God *realize* his absolute sovereignty. Under bereavements, the sovereignty of God is the most prominent perfection of his nature, and appears to comprehend and absorb all his other perfections. It meets the afflicted and bereaved, at every corner and in every object. It appears to be displayed so plainly every where, that they are astonished that they could ever overlook it any where.

Though the friends of God under the smiles of providence sometimes lose a sense of divine sovereignty; yet there is an aptitude in them to realize it, when it is clearly displayed by afflictions and bereavements. They have had such a lively sense of God's right to save, or to destroy their souls forever, that trials, afflictions, and bereavements naturally revive a realizing sense of his sovereignty in giving or taking away any inferior favours. I now proceed to show,

II. That such a realizing sense of the sovereignty of God in afflictions, has a natural tendency to excite true submission in every pious heart. "Behold, he taketh away, who *can* hinder him?" This expresses *a lively sense* of divine sovereignty. "Who *will* say unto him, What doest thou?" This equally expresses *unreserved submission* to divine sovereignty. While Job realized the absolute sovereignty of God in taking away his dearest enjoyments, it appeared so reasonable and so easy to submit to him, that he seemed to think it impossible for him or any other person to refuse submission. "Who *will* say unto him, What do-

est thou?" Such a realizing sense of divine sovereignty, always has a natural tendency to bring good men to unreserved submission, under the correcting hand of God. For,

1. While they realize the nature of his sovereignty, they cannot help seeing the true ground or reason of submission. His sovereignty results from his Supremacy. He is supreme in every natural and moral excellence, which gives him an absolute right and power to act independently of all other beings in the universe. When he acts as a sovereign, he neither solicits their assistance, nor asks their advice, nor consults their views, their desires, or their feelings. Hence his sovereignty is omnipotent and irresistible. In the exercise of it, he overturneth and removeth mountains; he shaketh the earth out of its place; he stoppeth the sun in its course, and sealeth up the stars. "He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth." "When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him." "Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him?" It must be reasonable to submit to such omnipotent sovereignty, because it is presumption to resist, or to say to him who is mighty in power, "What doest thou?" "Whoever hardened himself against him, and prospered?" God is wise in heart, and his sovereignty is always exercised agreeably to his unerring wisdom. Though he does not give to any of his creatures the reasons of his conduct; yet he always has good, yea, the best reasons for his most mysterious and sovereign dispensations of providence. He acts in the clear and comprehensive view of all things past, present, and to come. It is morally impossible, that he should ever make a designed or undesigned mistake, in any of his dealings

towards his intelligent creatures. His sovereignty consists in acting from wiser reasons, than the united wisdom of angels and men could suggest. And surely it becomes them to submit their finite to his infinite understanding, and their erring to his unerring wisdom. Besides, the sovereignty of God is not only omnipotent and omniscient, but perfectly benevolent. God is love, and his love dictates every sovereign act of his providence. He is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works; and as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. He displays paternal tenderness, when he taketh away, as well as when he giveth. In a word, his sovereignty displays the bright assemblage of all his natural and moral perfections. It has a natural tendency, therefore, to bow the hearts of all his friends to unreserved submission. It is, indeed, the only thing, which lays them under moral obligation to submit to his disposing will. If he did not act as a wise, benevolent, and omnipotent sovereign; or if he were under the least influence of any other being, in the dispensations of providence, he would not be worthy of their cordial and unreserved submission. But when they realize the nature and perfection of his sovereignty, they are sweetly constrained to feel and say as Job did, "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord? and shall we not receive evil?"

2. God designs to bring his children to submission, when he gives them a realizing sense of his holy and righteous sovereignty. He can excite other gracious affections in their hearts, by other means. He can awaken their love, their gratitude, and praise, by his word, or by his ordinances, or by the smiles of his providence. But nothing short of a realizing sense of his sovereignty under his correcting hand, is sufficient

to bring them to submission. Whenever he throws them in the dust, sinks them in sorrow, and tears from their hearts the dear objects of their affections, he means to bring them to a cordial resignation to his sovereignty. It is only, if need be, that he ever afflicts and bereaves them. But there would be no occasion for his throwing them into the furnace of affliction, if any thing besides a realizing sense of his sovereignty would soften their hearts to submission. And since he makes use of this severe method to reduce them to a humble, submissive spirit, we may well suppose, that this is the method, which has the most natural tendency to produce this effect in their hearts. God always employs the most proper means to accomplish his own designs. It is certain, however, that we cannot conceive of any thing better adapted to lead saints to submission, than a realizing sense of divine sovereignty. And it seems that God himself knew of no better method to bring his people of old to proper views and feelings. "Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Behold, I will melt them and try them: for *how* shall I do for the daughter of my people?" But it will more fully appear, that a realizing sense of the sovereignty of God naturally tends to lead his friends to unreserved submission, if we consider,

3. That it has so often produced this desirable effect in their hearts. Though they have sometimes murmured and repined under afflictions, yet a realizing sense of God's sovereign right to dispose of them, has eventually brought them to a cheerful resignation to his will. Job no sooner heard of the complicated evils brought upon him, than he saw the sovereign hand of God in them which instantaneously reduced him to perfect resignation. "Then Job answered and said, The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: bles-

sed be the name of the Lord" Though after this, he frequently felt and expressed hard and murmuring thoughts of God; yet a realizing view of divine sovereignty as frequently tranquilized his mind, and softened it into submission. When God demanded, "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it. Then Job answered the Lord and said, Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will proceed no further." God continues, however, to proclaim his sovereignty by a series of pointed and awful interrogations. "Then Job answered the Lord and said again, *I know that thou canst do every thing.* I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but *now mine eye seeth thee.* Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Such was the effect of a realizing sense of God's sovereignty upon the heart of Job; it silenced all his objections, restrained all his opposition, and prostrated him in silent submission at the foot of his Maker.

When Samuel denounced the displeasure of God against Eli, and foretold the dire calamities coming upon him, his pious mind instantly turned upon the sovereignty of God, which bowed his will to the divine will. Having heard the dreadful message, which was designed to make his ears, and the ears of all Israel to tingle, he solemnly paused, and then uttered these memorable words: "*It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good.*" His submission was unreserved; he was willing to bear whatever a holy and sovereign God should please to lay upon him.

God bereaved Aaron of two sons in one day, on a solemn occasion, and in an awful manner. Though his case was distressing beyond description, yet Moses

admonished him to suppress every token of sorrow, and conduct with that calmness and submission, which became the dignity of his sacred office. Aaron conducted accordingly. The account is this. "Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And *Aaron held his peace.*" His silence spoke louder than words, and emphatically said, "Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou?

God's dealings with the Shunamite were designed to display *his* sovereignty and *her* submission. He gave her a son in sovereignty, and in sovereignty took him away. When she was suddenly and unexpectedly bereaved of her darling child, she went to the man of God for direction and relief. But he declined to see her or hear her speak, and sent his servant to ask her, "Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child? *And she answered, It is well.*" She realized, she loved, and she submitted to the sovereignty of God.

A realizing sense of the sovereignty of God in afflicting and bereaving David, led him to feel and to express the genuine spirit of submission. He was able to say unto God in the sincerity of his heart, after he had gone through the fiery trial, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because *thou didst it.*"

While Paul was returning from a long journey to Jerusalem, a certain prophet named Agabus forewarned him of the danger of returning to that city. Whereupon all his friends unitedly entreated him to desist from his purpose. But he was so entirely reconciled to the sovereignty of God in the dispensations of providence, that he reproved and rejected their unsubmis-

sive advice. "Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded, they ceased, saying, "*The will of the Lord be done.*" Thus the friends of God, under his afflictive and chastising hand, realize his amiable sovereignty, which brings them to submit cheerfully and unreservedly to his disposing will.

It now remains to improve and apply the subject.

1. If all afflictions are designed and adopted to bring men to a cordial submission to divine sovereignty; then all true submission must be in its own nature absolute and unreserved. It must be like the object upon which it terminates, or towards which it is exercised. The sovereignty of God, which results from his absolute *Supremacy*, can admit of no limitations. He can no more be limited in dispensing evil, than in dispensing good, to mankind. He has an equal and unlimited right to dispose of every one of the human race, and to order the outward circumstances of every person in the world, just as he pleases. He may send prosperity to one, and adversity to another. He may afflict the rich or the poor, the high or the low, the godly or ungodly, in what way, or in what measure, he sees best. Where he has given much, there he may take away much. Those whom he has distinguished by great favours, he may distinguish by as great afflictions. His right to afflict is entirely unlimited, and of consequence, all submission under his afflictive hand must be absolute and unreserved. The afflicted may never say unto him, "What doest thou? nor even desire to stay his correcting hand." There can be no reserve in submission, because reserve would be, in its own nature, an exercise of sovereignty, rather than an exer-

cise of resignation. While a person feels truly submissive to God, he is as really willing that he should take away one favour as another, and all that he has given him, as a part. For he loves and approves of that very sovereignty, which is altogether absolute and unlimited. Abraham, in the exercise of submission, was as really willing that God should take away Isaac, as any other child he had. Eli, in the exercise of submission, was as really willing that God should destroy the whole, as a part of his family. David, when he fled from his son, and relinquished his throne and his kingdom, was as really willing that God should deprive him of all, as of a part of these earthly enjoyments. And our Lord himself, in the exercise of submission, was as really willing to die a cruel and ignominious, as any other death. All the friends of God are as really willing that he should afflict them, at one time as another, in one way as another, and in the highest as well as in the lowest degree. Their submission is as unreserved, as his sovereignty is unlimited.

2. If a realizing sense of the sovereignty of God leads his friends to submit to it in this world; then we must suppose, that it will lead them to submit to it in the world to come. Divine sovereignty is as unlimited in duration, as in extent. It will be displayed in time to come, as it has been in time past, and it will be far more clearly displayed, when time shall be no more. In a future state it will be seen, not only in afflicting good and bad men while passing through life; but in forming their diametrically opposite characters, and fitting them for their diametrically different conditions through eternity. There all the objects of divine election, and of divine reprobation, will appear together, and in the most striking contrast. There it will be seen, that one parent was taken and another

left, one child taken and another left, one friend taken and another left. There God will confer everlasting good upon one person, and inflict everlasting evil upon another. There it will appear, that all the dispensations of providence in this world were designed to lay, and did actually lay a foundation for endless joy, and endless sorrow. And who can doubt whether it will not be as trying to a parent, to see a child die an eternal as a temporal death: or as trying to a child, to see a parent die an eternal as a temporal death; or as trying to a husband, to see a wife die an eternal as a temporal death; or as trying to a wife, to see a husband die an eternal as a temporal death; or as trying to a friend, to see a friend die an eternal as a temporal death. The final separation of the wicked from the righteous, will excite unspeakably higher sensibility in their pious hearts, than any separation, bereavement, or affliction ever did, while they were passing through the fiery trials of their probationary state. And in this case it is certain, that their sensibility must be either submissive, or unsubmissive. It must not, and it cannot be unsubmissive; but it must be, and it will be, perfectly submissive. The bright and brightening displays of divine sovereignty, will perpetually awaken and increase their love to it, and sweetly constrain them to sing, "Amen, Alleluia," while they are continually beholding "the smoke of the torments of the damned ascending forever and ever." The friends of God will be cordially and unreservedly submissive to his sovereignty, as long as they and he shall exist.

3. If a realizing sense of divine sovereignty naturally tends to lead men to an unconditional submission to God; then this doctrine ought to be plainly taught and inculcated. Many wish, that preachers would keep this divine attribute out of their sight as much as

possible, because it is, of all others, the most offensive to their selfish hearts. They are willing to have all the natural and moral perfections of the Deity exhibited before them, so far as it can be done, without bringing his sovereignty into view. They are willing, that God should be almighty, if they might direct the exercise of his omnipotence. They are willing, that God should be infinitely wise; if they might direct the exercise of his wisdom. They are willing, that God should be perfectly holy, just, and good, if they might direct the exercise of his holiness, justice, and goodness. They are willing, that God should govern the whole universe; if they might direct him how to govern it for their own benefit. In a word, they are willing, that God should exist, and exercise all the perfections of his nature, if he would cease to be Sovereign, and suffer himself to be under their controlling influence. But this is naturally and morally impossible, because he can no more cease to be, or to act as a Sovereign, than he can cease to be God. If ministers, therefore, would preach in the most instructive and profitable manner to saints and sinners, they must exhibit the sovereignty of God, in the fullest, clearest, and strongest light. This is necessary in order to give their people just views of the true character of God; and to bring them to an unreserved submission to all the dispensations of providence and grace, which is the great end to be answered by preaching. How often does God himself say in his word, that he visits mankind with signal mercies, and wasting judgments, "that they may *know* that he is the Lord?" And surely if he means to make his sovereignty appear in all *his conduct;* ministers ought not to shun to declare it, in all *their preaching*. They cannot preach any doctrine, which is more perfectly adapted to reach the

hearts and consciences of their hearers, and to prepare them to glorify and enjoy God forever.

4. If afflictions are designed and suited to make men realize divine sovereignty; then they always try their hearts, whether they are friendly, or unfriendly to God. While he pours the blessings of providence into their bosoms, and gives them uninterrupted prosperity, they are all apt to think, that they love him in sincerity. But when he treats them as a Sovereign, and visits them with the rod of affliction, then he tries their sincerity. If they are sincere, they will submit to his sovereignty; but if they are insincere, they will hate and oppose it. As God never lets men know, whether he is afflicting them for their own good, or for their neighbour's good, or for their enemies' good, or for the general good; so he always means to try their hearts, and draw forth their benevolent, or selfish feelings. He led his people of old through the wilderness, to try them and see what was in their hearts. And the means he used answered the end he proposed. His friends submitted, but his enemies rebelled. Afflictions always produce these different effects in the hearts of saints and sinners. Those who sincerely love God are willing, that he should answer his own purposes, in casting them into the furnace of affliction. They feel as he feels. He desires to answer the best ends by their afflictions, and they desire the same. They feel that unreserved submission to God, that Job felt when he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." But when those who are destitute of grace are afflicted, and realize, that God designs to give them all the pain and anguish they endure, they find that they have a carnal mind, which will not submit to divine sovereignty. They inwardly say, that he who made them shall not reign over them. They would

fain flee out of his hand. Afflictions equally try the hearts of both the friends and enemies of God, and give them the best opportunity to know what manner of persons they are.

5. If afflictions are designed and calculated to bring the friends of God to a cordial submission to his sovereignty; then they will eventually do them good. God always makes the means he uses answer the ends, which he intends they shall answer. And he tells us, that he means to teach his people to profit by all his fatherly chastisements. He says, that all things shall work together for good to them that love him. He says, that their light afflictions shall work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He assures them, that whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Though real saints sometimes murmur, and complain of God under his chastising hand; yet they finally fall at his feet, submit to his sovereignty, and become partakers of his holiness. Job alternately submitted and murmured, but at last, he cheerfully and unreservedly submitted to the rectitude and wisdom of the divine conduct towards him, which answered the very end, that he had desired and expected in the days of his adversity. In that dark and gloomy season he said, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath *tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*" David gratefully acknowledges, that he had found peculiar benefit from the afflictive hand of God. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now I have kept thy

word." God has often reclaimed, purified, and comforted his children, by means of sore and heavy afflictions. And it is always to be expected, that they will all eventually find great spiritual advantage from his fatherly chastisements. This the apostle suggests to christians for their consolation under their fiery trials. "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."

Finally, this discourse applies, with peculiar propriety, to the Family and Friends of the late Deacon Gillmore. We presume, that it was the *prayer* of every christian, and the *desire* of every person, in this place, that his languishing health might be restored, and his valuable life might be continued for many years. He was universally and justly beloved. His peaceable disposition, his native modesty, his uniform piety, and his prudent, inoffensive deportment, gained the hearts of this people. Though he was called to act in a variety of civil, military, and religious offices; yet he so manifestly endeavoured to serve God and his generation, that he not only escaped the censure, but secured the esteem and approbation of the publick. But notwithstanding the prayers and desires of his friends and family, God has put a period to his life and usefulness, in the midst of his days. It becomes us to be dumb, and not open our mouths, because he has done it. He has seen better reasons for shortening his life, than we could see for lengthening it out. And, perhaps, his principal design in this instance of mortality was, to bring us to a cordial and unreserved submission to his amiable and absolute sovereignty,

It certainly becomes this Church to be humble and submissive under the sovereign hand of God, who has diminished their number and weakened their strength, by taking away a member and officer, whose service they not only desired, but peculiarly needed. As this circumstance displays the sovereignty of God, so it lays them under peculiar obligations to look to him for his special direction in the path of duty. Let it be their heart's desire and prayer to God, that he would completely repair the breach he has made among them.

Not only the Church, but the People, and especially those in the meridian of life, ought to be deeply affected with the death of a man, whose face they beheld, whose voice they heard, and whose company they enjoyed, with a great deal of pleasure. He has taught them how to live, and how to die. He has left them an example, which they may follow with safety and advantage, by which, though dead, he now speaketh. And whoever will live, as he lived, may hope to die as he died, in favour with God and man.

The bereaved Widow has much occasion to mourn, but not to mourn as those who have no hope. She has ground to believe, that her dear departed Husband has met with the approbation of God, which is infinitely better than the approbation of man. This is a consolation, which ought to melt her heart into gratitude as well as submission, God is giving her an opportunity to realize his sovereignty, and to exercise that supreme affection to him, which she has publickly professed to have. If she will now keep covenant with God, he will keep covenant with her, and grant her covenant mercies. As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. If she will only cast her burdens upon his arm, she may possess

her soul in peace, and humbly hope, that this sore bereavement and fiery trial will work for her a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

The fatherless Children are capable of feeling and duly estimating the great loss they have sustained, by the death of a dear and indulgent Parent. After holding them long in doubtful expectation, God has brought upon them the evil they feared. "He has taken away, and they could not hinder him;" and will they now presume to say unto him, "What doest thou?" It becomes them to bow in silent and cordial submission to his holy and righteous sovereignty. They ought to be thankful, that God graciously preserved the life of their Father, until they have come to years of discretion and self-direction. It is now their indispensable duty to remember his instructions and counsels, and to imitate every thing amiable in his character and conduct: God has of late, been striving with them by his Spirit, and he is now striving with them by his Providence. If they will now hear his voice, let them not harden their hearts, but acquaint themselves with him, and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto them. Amen.

SERMON XXI.

CONSTANT PREPARATIONS MAKING FOR THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

2 PETER, iii, 9.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness.

WE should naturally suppose, that God would early reveal to mankind the day of judgment, in which they are all so deeply interested. Accordingly we find, that God inspired Enoch, the seventh from Adam, to foretel this great and solemn event, in a plain and striking manner. "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute *judgment* upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." To this and other predictions of the last great day, the apostle refers christians in the context, where he says, "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of *remembrance:* that ye may be *mindful* of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets." After this intimation, that the day of judgment had been long foretold, he proceeds to predict himself, how stupid and profane sinners in time to come would feel, and think, and speak in respect to this solemn subject. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, *where is the promise of his coming?* for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

For this they are willingly ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water, and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is *not slack* concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." God is not slack in fulfilling his promise to judge the world, in the sense of these objectors. For, he neither alters his purpose, nor remits his operations, but constantly employs the whole creation, in preparing things for the day of judgment. But his plan is so great and extensive, that a thousand years bears no more proportion to the time necessary to accomplish it, than one day bears to the time necessary to accomplish any human design. Though he moves all the wheels of nature as fast as they can be moved; yet ages must roll away, before he can finish his great work, and prepare all intelligent creatures for the retributions of eternity. The whole course of providence, instead of weakening, serves to confirm the apostle's reasoning against the criminal and dangerous infidelity of scoffers, and plainly teaches us this solemn and importanttruth:

That God is preparing all things, as fast as possible, for the day of judgment.

We live in the last days, in which scoffers have actually come, who not only call in question the inspiration of the Scriptures, but the immortality of the soul

and a future day of retribution. If there be indeed such a solemn day approaching, it is much to be desired, that this truth should be set in so clear and strong a light, as to carry irresistible conviction to every mind. And I cannot but hope the following considerations will convince the understanding and conscience of every person, that God is preparing all things, as fast as possible, for the day of judgment.

1. God has but one supreme end in all his works. This end he proposed before the foundation of the world. To this end he has had an eye in every step he has taken, in creation, providence, and redemption. And this end is to be completely unfolded and accomplished at the day of judgment. All things tend to that day, as to their centre and final issue. Then all intelligent and accountable creatures will be prepared for, and fixed in that state, for which they were originally and eternally intended. All the subordinate designs of the Deity stand related to and connected with his supreme ultimate design, which he can never relinquish, nor be slack to accomplish. The reason why men are ever slack in pursuing their ultimate design, is because they either give it up, or make it subordinate to some other ultimate design. They often alter their minds in respect to their ultimate end, and the means to accomplish it, which often retards, and sometimes prevents, their finally obtaining their supreme object. But God never alters his mind in respect to his ultimate purpose, and the means to attain it. There is no new or superior object in the universe to divert his attention, or excite his exertions. If he pursues any thing, he must pursue his original ultimate design, and carry it forward as fast as possible. He cannot be slack as men are, through weakness, despondency, or mutability of purpose. He cannot, for a moment, let his

great work stand still, or go backward, but is morally obliged to carry it on, with as much constancy and rapidity, as the nature of his supreme purpose will admit. There is just as much reason to believe, that he will prepare all things as fast as possible for the day of judgment, as there is to believe, that he had any supreme or ultimate end in creation.

2. The heart of God is wholly set upon the great design to be accomplished at the great day. He formed this design from eternity, and in preference to all other possible designs. His heart, to speak with reverence, is bound up in it, and all his felicity flows from it. He has no other source of happiness, than the consummation of his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus, and which will be consummated at the last day. The Lord of hosts is far more zealous to attain the object of his supreme affection, than any of mankind ever were to attain the objects of their highest wishes. His supreme affection as far surpasses the supreme affection of his most exalted creatures, as his natural perfections surpass their natural abilities. He must, therefore, prepare all things, as fast as possible, for the attainment of the object of his supreme and infinitely ardent affection. He must cause the immensely numerous events of providence to follow one another, without the least intermission or interruption, until they finally usher in the judgment of the great day.

3. God is able to prepare all things for this most important and desirable event, without the least delay. He is able to pursue his great design, with perfect ease and constancy. He can work, and none can let it. Men often meet with difficulties and obstacles, which they cannot surmount, and which retard or prevent the accomplishment of their designs, as soon as they intended and desired. Or if they meet with no external ob-

structions, their exertions are laborious and wearisome, and require them to take time to recruit their exhausted strength. But the Almighty is liable to no such impediments or relaxations. He can do every thing with perfect facility. His power consists altogether in his will. Whatever he wills should exist, exists instantaneously He said, "Let there be light. and there was light." He commanded, and all things existed and stood fast. And by the same word of his power, or exercise of his will, he constantly preserves and governs all his creatures and all his works. His omnipotent arm never becomes weak or weary, by the most incessant and powerful exertions in upholding the weight and controlling the affairs of the whole universe. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary? We cannot conceive of any reason or cause, why the omnipotent Deity should not pursue his ultimate design as fast as possible, and accomplish it as soon as possible. Hence we are constrained to believe, that he is operating in every part of the universe, as fast as possible, to prepare all his intelligent creatures for their great and last account.

4. There is no more reason to think, that God *will be slack* in fulfilling his promise of coming to judgment, than to suppose, that he *has been slack*, in fulfilling other promises of far less importance. He promised to destroy the old world, but he was an hundred and twenty years in preparing things for that awful catastrophe. He promised to give Abraham the land of Canaan, but he was four hundred years, in preparing his seed and the seven devoted nations for that interesting event. He promised, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, but he

was four thousand years, in preparing the way for the coming and death of the promised Messiah. Though God was so long, yet he was not slack, in fulfilling these promises. He undoubtedly prepared things, as fast as possible, for the accomplishment of them. And there is precisely the same ground to believe, that though God has employed several ages past, and may employ several ages to come, in preparing the way for fulfilling his promise concerning the great day; yet he will prepare all things for it, as fast as possible. The steady succession of day and night, and of summer and winter, and the rapid revolutions and changes in the natural and moral world, afford a constant and increasing evidence, that God is pursuing his ultimate end in creation, and preparing all things as fast as possible, for the great concluding scene. To confirm this and all the preceding observations, I may add,

5. That God has all means, instruments, and secondary causes in his hand, to accomplish his purpose and promise of coming to judge the world in righteousness. As he has made all things for himself, and fitted them for his use; so he constantly employs all things in his service. He makes use of every creature and of every object, which he has brought into existence, as a voluntary or involuntary instrument of preparing the way for the final settlement of all the concerns of all moral beings.

We know, that he directs all the motions and changes in the material creation, in reference to his supreme and ultimate design. Inspiration tells us, that "while the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." The sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, the ocean, and all the elements, are so many instruments, which he can and will continually employ

in his service to the end of time. And it is easy to conceive, from the use he has made of those material objects heretofore, what important events he may bring about, and what important purposes he may answer, by their instrumentality in time to come. By his common providence, without any special or miraculous interpositions, he may cause fire and hail, snow and vapours, gentle showers, stormy winds, and rolling billows, to fulfil his word, and prepare the way for the closing scene of time.

All the animal species, as well as material objects, are under his constant and supreme direction; and we may be assured, that he will employ them, as instruments of carrying forward his ultimate design to the end of the world. He made them, to serve his purposes in this world only, and when the present material system is dissolved, they will cease to exist. But till that period arrives, he will use them as the rod of his wrath, or the ministers of his love. He employed frogs, and flies, and serpents, and the meanest insects, to prepare the king and kingdom of Egypt for ruin. He employed the ravens to feed Elijah, and the fish to supply Peter, and the colt to serve Christ. God is still the owner of all the fowls of the mountains, of all the wild beasts of the field, and of all the cattle upon a thousand hills, and has an absolute right to dispose of them to serve the purposes of his providence. Nor can there be the least ground to doubt, whether he will employ the whole animal creation to prepare the way for the accomplishment of his supreme and ultimate end in all his works.

And we ought to consider furthermore, that God continually employs all intelligent creatures, as the free and voluntary instruments of carrying into execution his original and supreme purpose in the creation of

the universe. He made use of Satan to bring about the fall of man and the death of Christ. He employs evil spirits to prepare the wicked for the day of evil. And he employs the holy angels to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation. He also employs rulers and subjects, ministers and people, parents and children, masters and servants, and every son and daughter of Adam, to prepare one another for their future and final state. Such numerous and various means, instruments, and secondary causes God is continually employing to prepare things for the day of judgment. And now can there be any just ground to imagine, that he is slack concerning his promise, or that he will never fulfil it? Did not Noah give sufficient evidence to the ungodly world of their approaching destruction, by the men and means which he employed, for an hundred and twenty years, in preparing the ark for the safety of himself and family? Did not Solomon give abundant evidence, that he would finish the temple, while he employed so many thousand hands, year after year, in preparing materials for that large, elegant, and superb structure? But do not the vastly greater preparations which God is constantly making for the day of judgment, give us far more clear, striking, and infallible evidence, that he will bring about that unspeakably awful and joyful event, as soon as possible?

This subject now suggests some important things, which call for our most serious attention.

1. The great preparations, which God is making for the last day, give us just ground to expect, that when it comes, it will be a most solemn and important event. If it should bear a proper proportion, in point of solemnity and importance, to the time and means employed in preparing for it, it will unspeakably sur-

pass, in solemnity and importance, all other scenes which ever have taken place, or ever will take place, in time or eternity. Accordingly the apostle, with peculiar propriety and emphasis, calls it THE GREAT DAY. The circumstances, the business, and the consequences of it, will all unite to render it solemn and interesting beyond the present conception of men and angels. The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; and the earth shall be burned up. The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth. Then shall the Son of man sit upon the throne of his glory, with all the holy angels with him, and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, and he shall set the sheep on his right-hand, but the goats upon the left. Then the books, which contain the records of time and eternity will be opened. Then every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil, will be brought into judgment. Then whatever had been covered, shall be revealed; and whatever had been hidden shall be made known. Then the hidden things of darkness, and the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed. The sins of the righteous, as well as the sins of the wicked, shall be made manifest; and whatever had been done in heaven, in earth, and in hell, shall be exhibited and published before the whole universe. This solemn process will be closed by the sentence of the supreme Judge, who will say unto them on his right-hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from

the foundation of the world." But he will say unto them on the left-hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." While these shall go away into everlasting punishment, the righteous shall enter into life eternal. Such will be the final separation between holy and unholy angels; between holy and unholy men; between holy and unholy parents; between holy and unholy children; between holy and unholy friends, which must excite the highest joys and sorrows, and the keenest sensibilities in the hearts of the happy and the miserable that can be conceived!

2. The great preparations which God is making for the day of judgment plainly intimate, that the decisions of that day will be conclusive and irreversible. Origen supposed, that there will be an everlasting series of changes and revolutions in the characters and conditions of moral beings. And some ingenious and learned divines have since supposed, that notwithstanding the sentence of condemnation that shall be passed on the devil and all impenitent sinners at the great day, they will still be in a probationary state, and after they have suffered severely, for a longer or shorter period, they will be purified, and prepared for a restoration to the favour and enjoyment of God forever. But the preparations, which God is making for the day of judgment, are a plain and visible refutation of this unreasonable and unscriptural sentiment. Why should God employ such a long space of time, and such a vast variety of means and instruments, to prepare all moral and accountable creatures for the account they are to give at the great day, if they are afterwards to have a more decisive and final trial? The reason, which the apostle gives for God's being so long before he brings on the day of judgment, is, that he

may give sinful creatures a sufficient space of repentance, so that they may all be prepared for that great day of decision. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; *but is long-suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*" This passage plainly implies, that God will bring all those sinners of mankind to repentance, whom he intends to save, before the day of judgment. And hence we may justly conclude, that if he intended to save any or all of the fallen angels, he would also bring them to repentance, before the general judgment comes. But we are expressly told, that they will be reserved in chains of darkness till that day arrives, and then will be doomed, with the finally impenitent of mankind, to everlasting punishment. Besides, God cannot prepare all things for the general judgment, until he has actually obtained his ultimate end in creation. Then, and not till then, he can vindicate his own character and conduct in the view of all intelligent beings, which is the principal reason, why a general judgment is proper and necessary. Without calling the whole intelligent creation together, he could not convince every individual, that he had treated not only him, but every other creature, perfectly right. But the process of the last day will fasten a conviction upon the minds of both the friends and enemies of God, of the perfect rectitude of all his purposes and operations from the beginning to the end of time. Hence the design of the general judgment, as well as the long and vast preparations making for it, leave no ground to expect, that there ever will be a review or rehearing of the case of those, who shall then be condemned to suffer the due reward of their deeds. If any one indulges this absurd and fallacious hope, let him hear the sol-

emn admonition of Him, who holds the keys of death and of hell in his hands, and who openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth. "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him: lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."

3. Since God is making use of us, as free, voluntary agents to prepare things for the day of judgment, we ought to esteem every duty, which he has enjoined upon us, as a real privilege. It is certainly our duty, when we know his ultimate design, to fall in with it, and sincerely endeavour to promote it. And it is certainly a privilege to be employed in promoting any great and good design. Any benevolent person would esteem it a duty and a privilege, to assist in carrying on any important work or business, which was designed to promote the publick good. The preparations which God is making for the great and last day, are designed to promote the most desirable and the most important end. And every duty which men can perform, will serve to carry forward that great and most desirable purpose. It was the duty of Noah to build an ark to preserve himself and family, and to prevent the extinction of the whole human race; and that duty was a privilege. It was the duty of Moses to lead the people of God out of the house of bondage to the land of promise; and that duty was a privilege. It was the duty of Solomon to build the temple for the honour of God and the good of his people; and that duty was a privilege. It is no less a duty and privilege, to be aiding and assisting, or as the scripture more properly terms it, to be workers together with God, in his preparations for

the day, which shall bring to a happy close his eternal purpose in all his works. It is a privilege to ministers of the gospel, to have the care and instruction of immortal souls, and to be employed as instruments of preparing them for their appearance before their supreme Judge. It is a privilege to rulers, to rule for God and to promote the interests of his spiritual kingdom. It is a privilege to parents, to be employed in training up their children for the parts they are to act on the stage of life, and for the account they are to give before the supreme tribunal. And it is a privilege to every one of us, to have the care our own souls, and to be allowed to prepare ourselves to appear with safety and joy before the judgment-seat of Christ. Every duty we perform, has some influence in preparing ourselves or others for the great day of retribution; and for this reason, we ought to esteem every duty assigned us, as a real privilege. It is an opportunity of promoting an infinitely important design, which will be a source of felicity to God and to all the inhabitants of heaven.

4. The constant and great preparations, which God is making for the day of judgment, loudly admonish all persons of all ages and conditions, to live a holy and devout life. This is the plain and practical inference which the apostle draws from this solemn subject. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Wherefore, beloved brethren, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." This exhortation applies with

equal force and obligation to all men, whether rich or poor, high or low, bond or free. They must all eventually meet together and stand upon a level before the judgment seat of Christ, where neither riches, nor honours, nor talents, nor any of the boasted distinctions in this world, will have the least avail to gain the approbation of their Judge. The day of grace, which they now enjoy, is the most important period of their existence. All their eternal interests are suspended upon their conduct in this short and uncertain life. If they repent, and believe the gospel, and live soberly, and righteously, and godlily in this present evil world, they may look for the blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. But if they abuse their time, their talents, their wealth, or their influence, in corrupting themselves and others, they will treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. These are the terms upon which they shall certainly be accepted, or rejected in the great day of decision. Let none deceive themselves. "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." It is the most important business of all men in this world, to prepare to meet their Judge in peace. He has committed the care of their souls to themselves, and pointed out the path they must pursue and the duties they must practise, to secure his favour, and obtain that crown of righteousness, which he has promised to all those, who love his appearing. They ought to feel and act as the primitive christians did in their probationary state. "Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent from the body, we may be present

with the Lord and accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." The ungodly cannot stand in judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. Their hearts cannot endure, nor their hands be strong, in the day that God shall deal with them. They will find it to be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. When the slothful servant was condemned and cast away, there was weeping and knashing of teeth. When the man without the wedding garment, was bound hand and foot and cast into outer darkness, there was weeping and knashing of teeth. And Christ has told all the finally impenitent, that there shall be weeping and knashing of teeth, when they shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets sit down in the kingdom of God, and they themselves shut out.

THE END.

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